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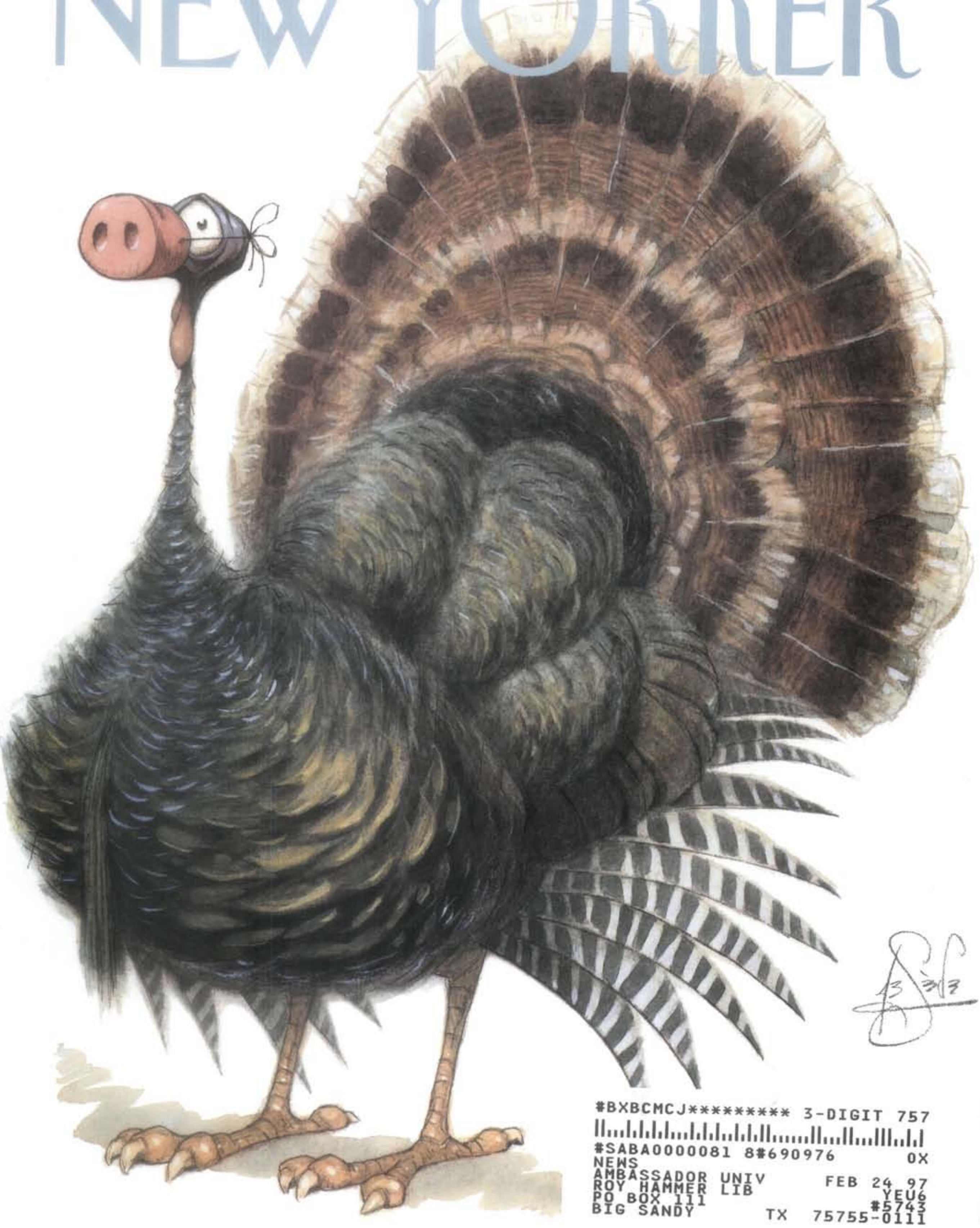

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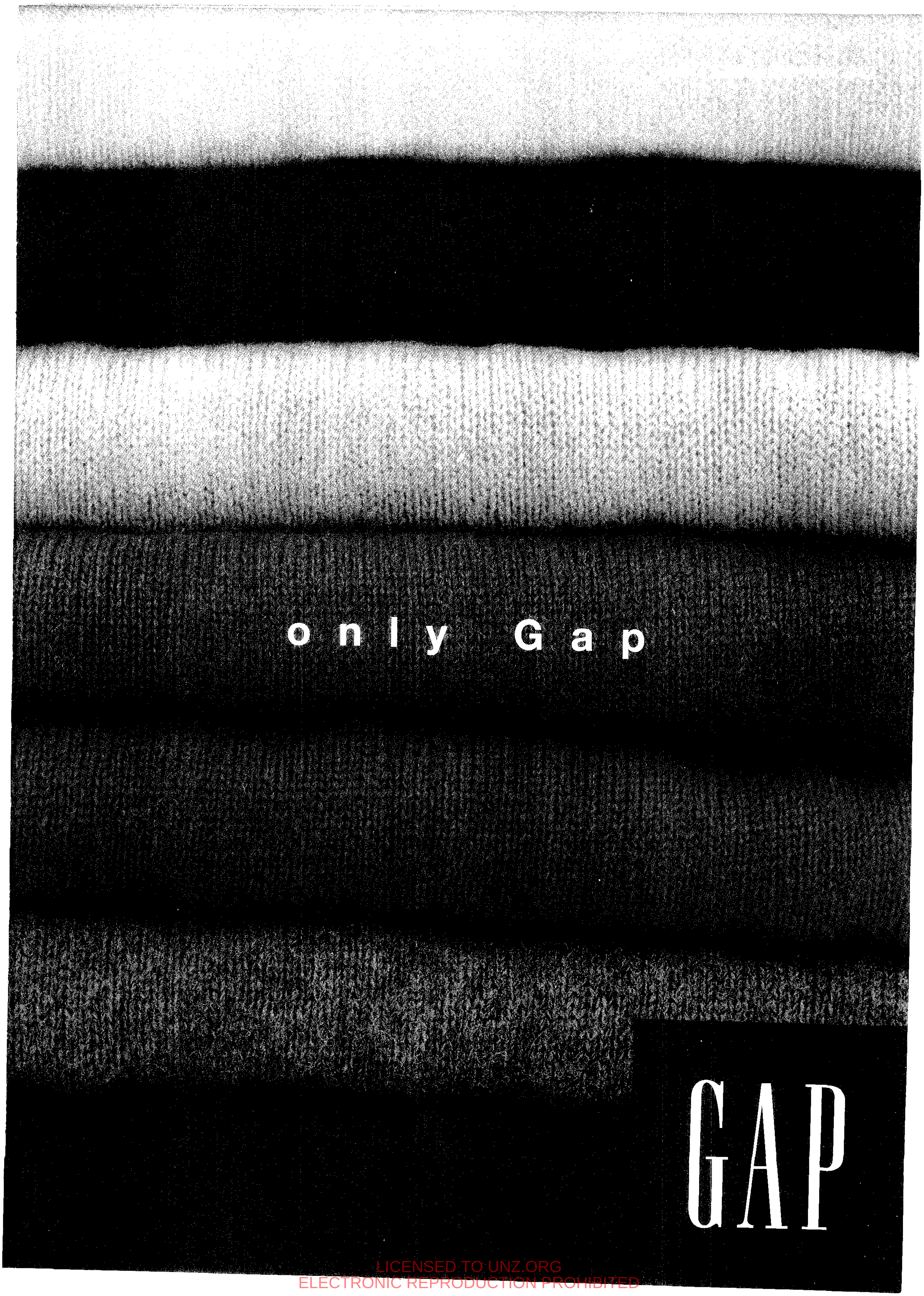
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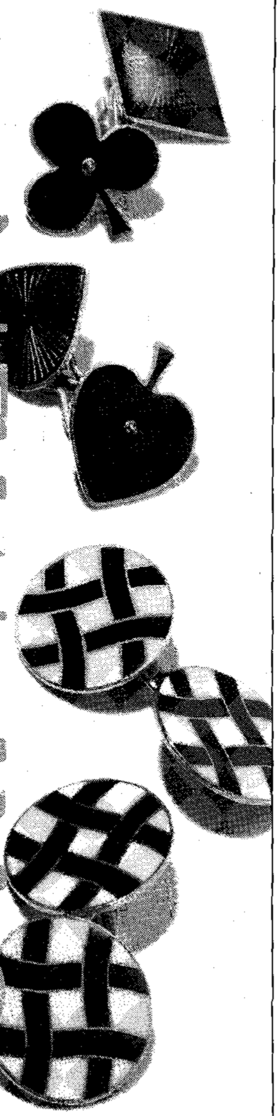

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THE NEW YORKER

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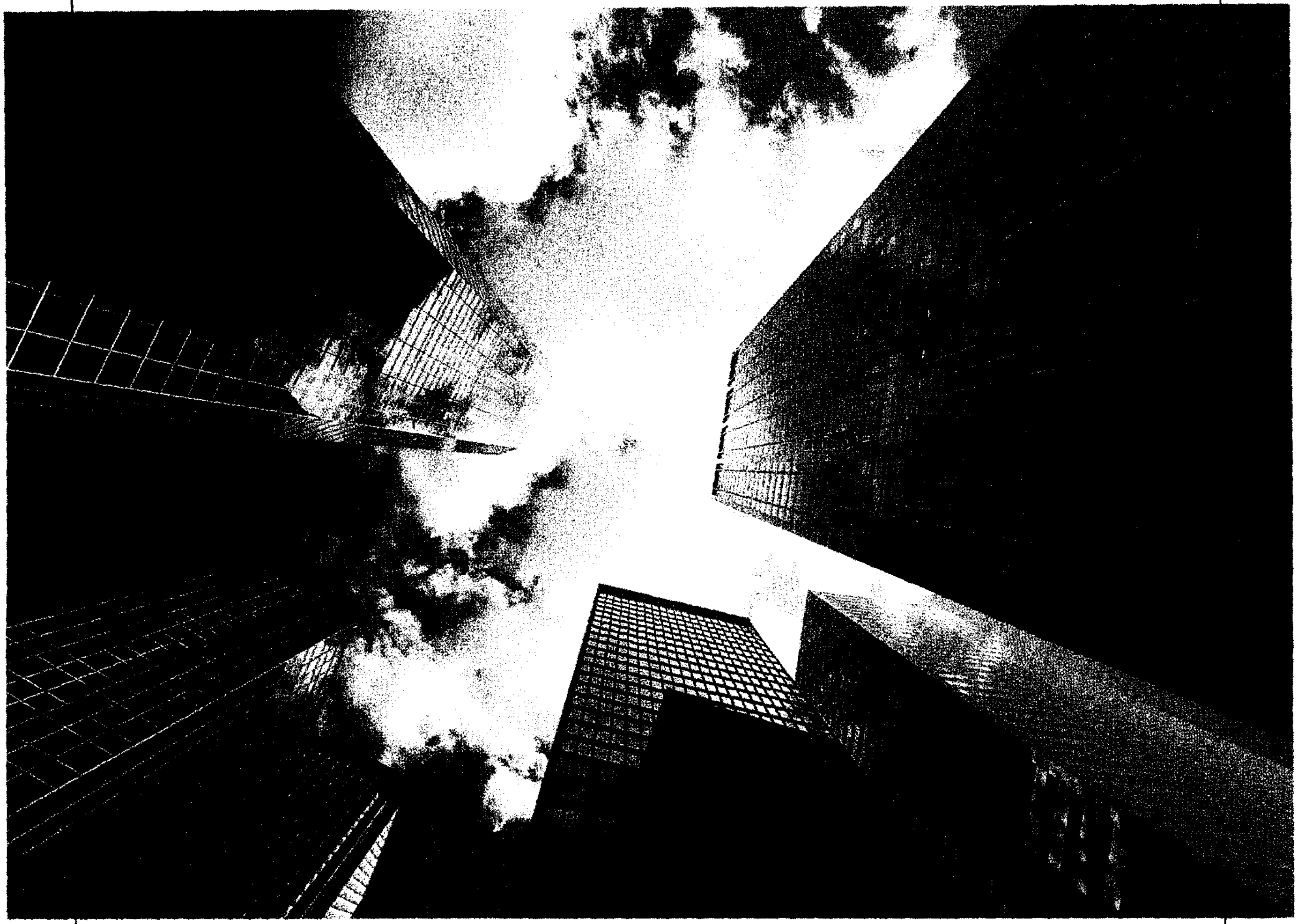

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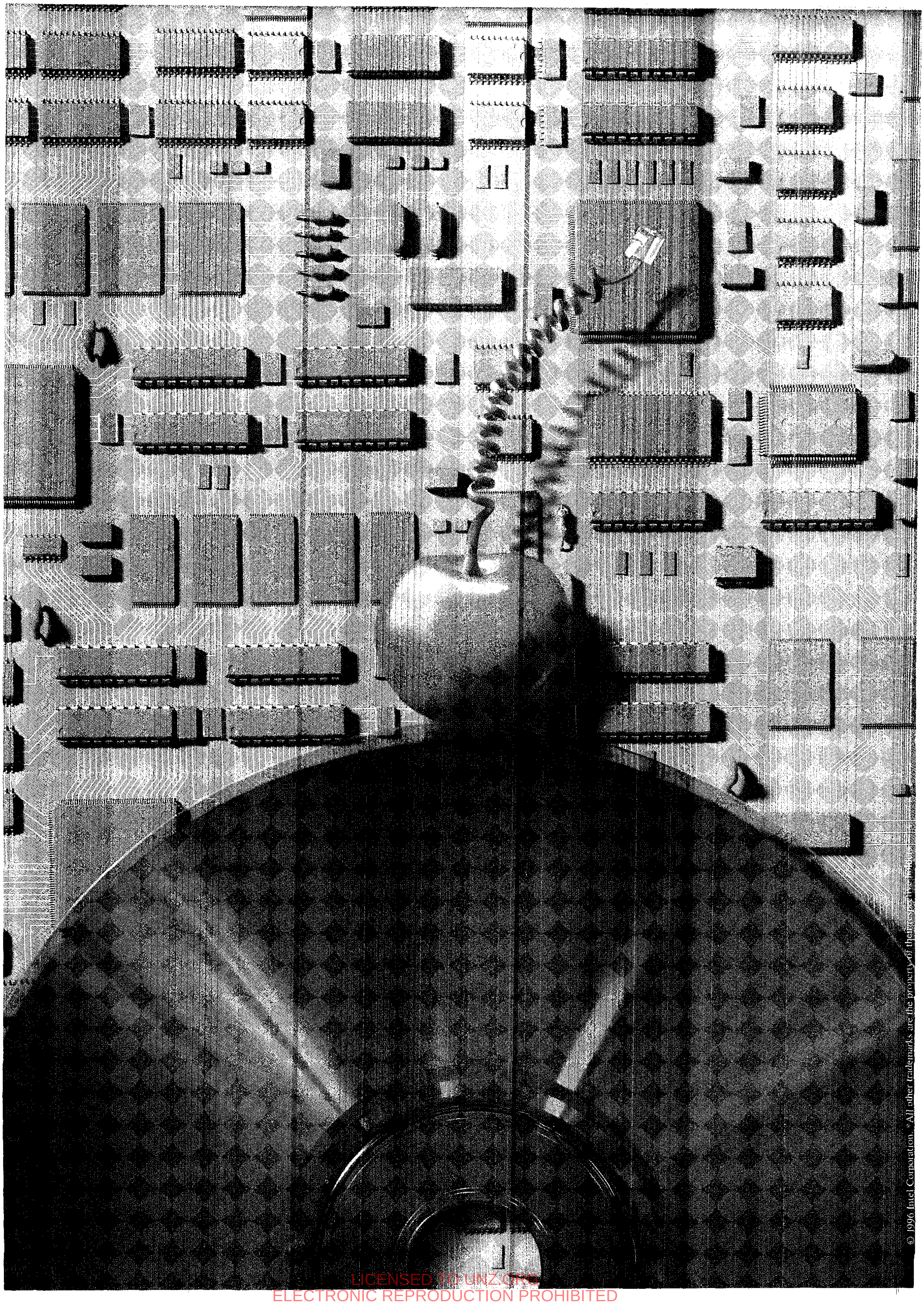

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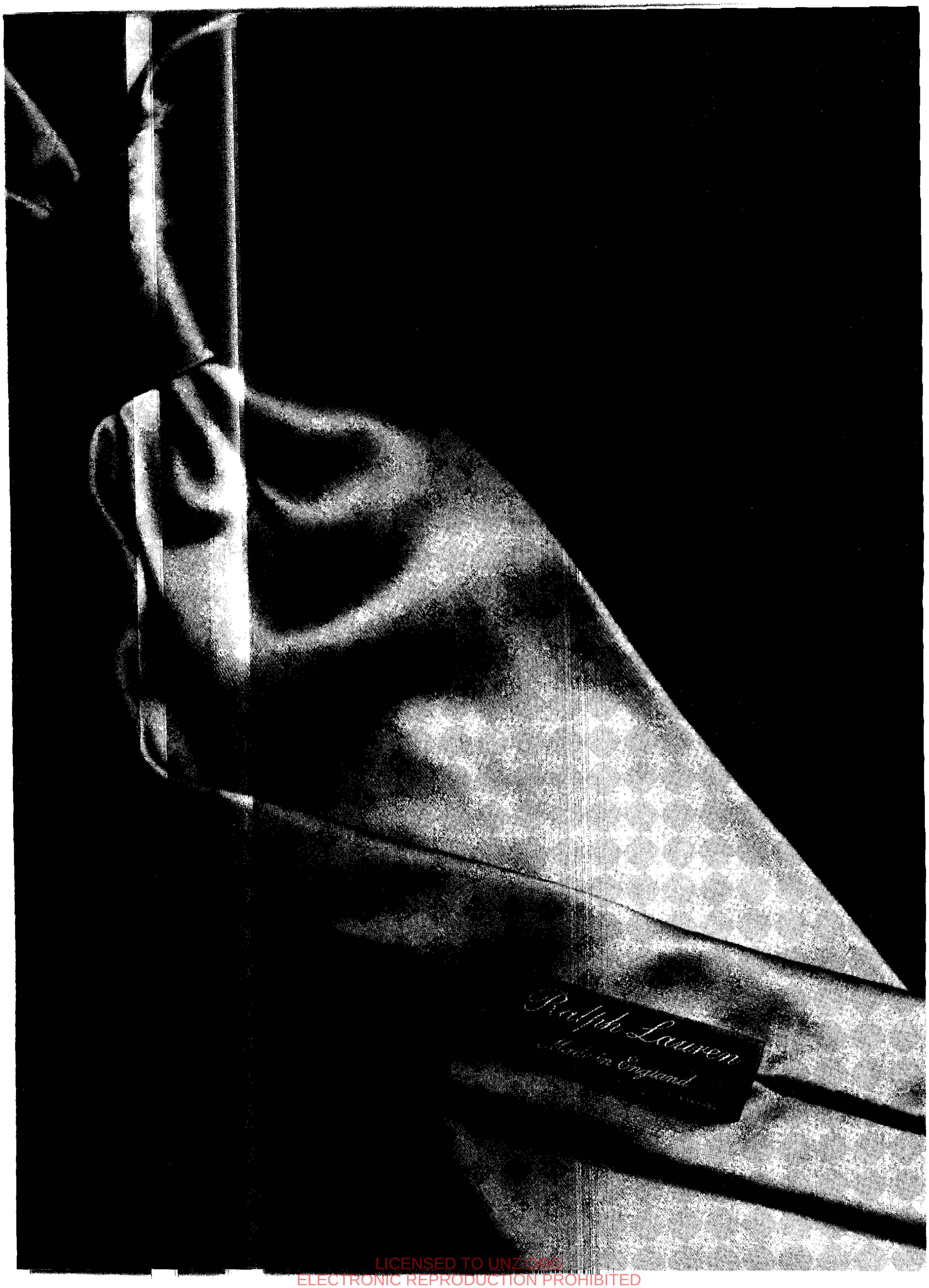
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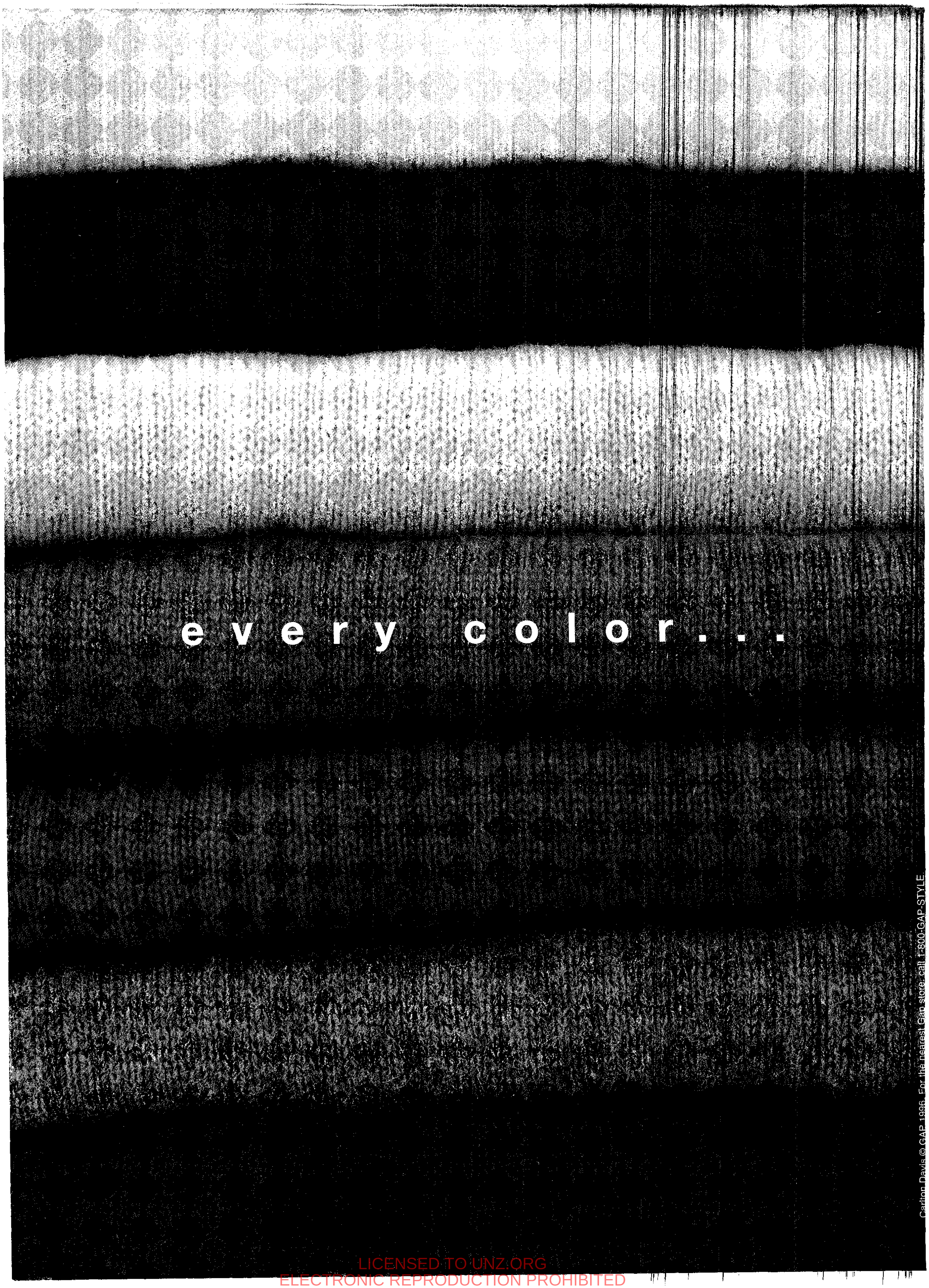
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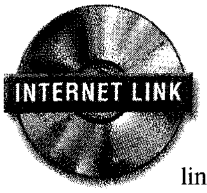

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COMMENT

ENABLING WASHINGTON

The coming crunch in The Hague.

FOR Americans and for Bosnians, the election season, mercifully, is over. Our election was free and fair, and its timing was determined by the calendar; their election was unfree and unfair, and its timing was determined by the timing of our election. Nominally, of course, Bosnia voted when it did—on September 14th—because of a deadline that was specified in the Dayton Accords, signed a year ago. But the Dayton Accords also specified that first there was to be freedom of speech, the press, and association; that refugees were to be allowed to vote in their home towns; and that indicted war criminals were to be removed from power, arrested, and transported to The Hague for trial by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. None of these Dayton-stipulated preconditions was met, despite the presence in Bosnia of sixty thousand troops of the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR). Only Dayton's electoral schedule was rigidly adhered to. One result is that while the Bosnians are ruled by the same factions as before, those factions now have a spurious legitimacy. Another is that President Clinton's glide path to reëlection was unobstructed by Balkan complications: the President was able to boast of a steadily consolidating peace, and even to maintain the fiction that America's twenty thousand IFOR troops would be out, as promised, by the middle of December.

In Bosnia, that prospect was never taken seriously. "What comes after IFOR?" went the joke there. "Simple: I-Five." Sure enough, Clinton, his reëlection secured, has lately announced that a force of thirty-one thousand other NATO troops, some eighty-five hundred of them American, will remain in Bosnia for eighteen months longer.

Perhaps the conclusion of the American election will now allow for some further instances of clear action—or, at least, clear speech—on Bosnia. The question that most achingly calls out for such clarity concerns the disposition of the dozens of indicted war criminals who, according to Dayton, are late for their appointments with the Hague Tribunal.

Partly owing to the overhang of the American election, IFOR spent the past year tying itself in knots of denial and avoidance over those war criminals. Its commanders maintained that apprehending them was emphatically not part of IFOR'S "mandate"—that stout-hearted, hairy-chested word, which ineluctably metamorphosed over time into a synonym for the headlong flight from responsibility. No, the commanders insisted, apprehension of war criminals was always

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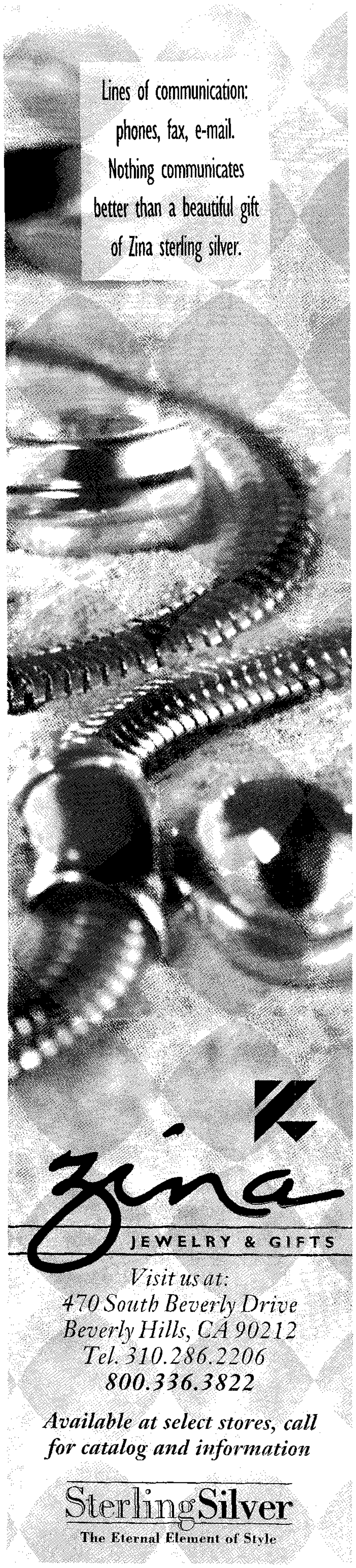

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somebody else's job, in particular that of the local police—a dubious reading of Dayton, rendered all the more improbable by the fact that some of the war criminals in question have since *become* the local police. Are they supposed to arrest themselves?

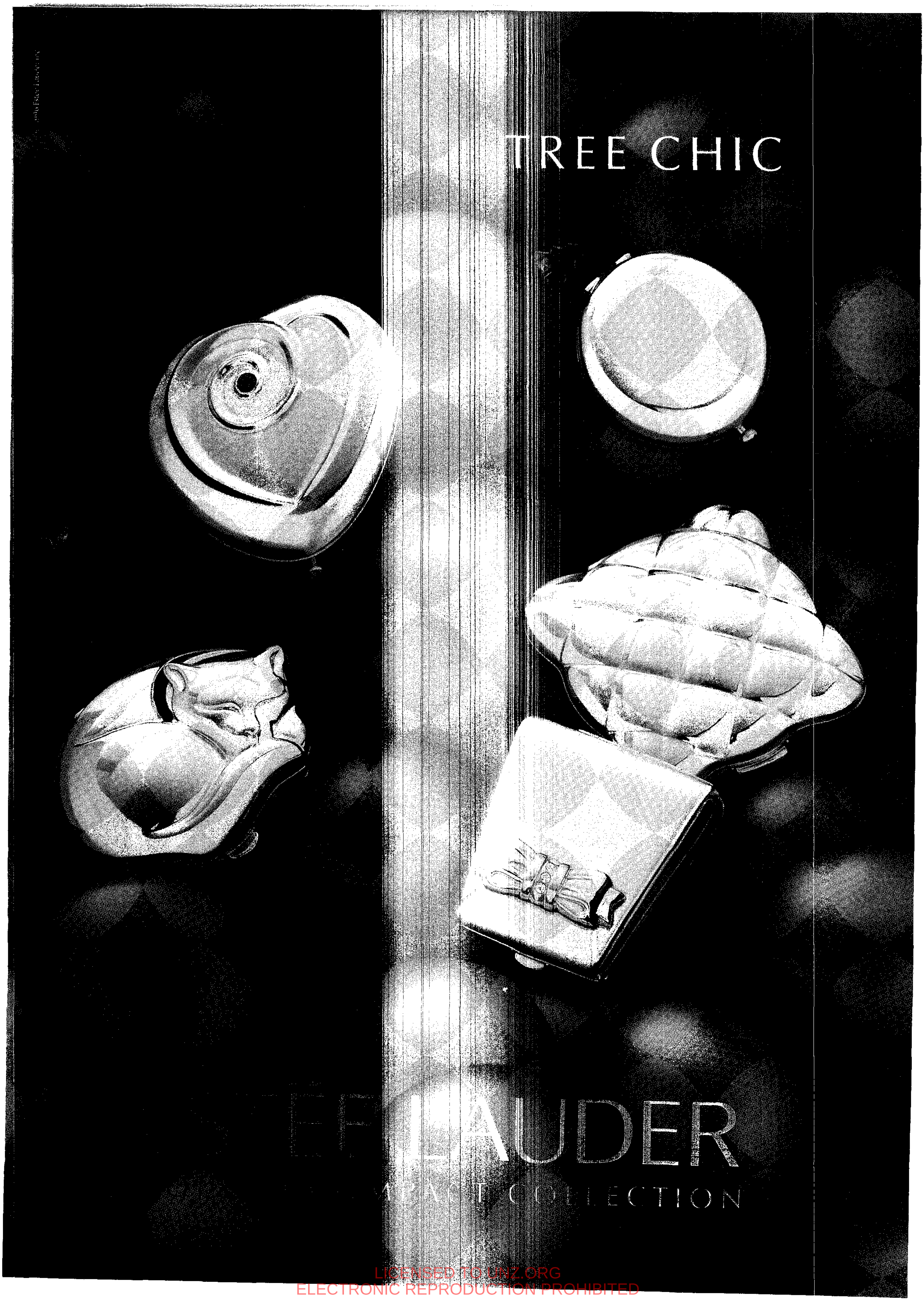
Even so, the stars may at last have begun to align themselves in a way that could facilitate arrests. Some of the war criminals are starting to fall out among themselves. (Radovan Karadzic, the nominally deposed leader of the Bosnian Serbs, and his military counterpart, Ratko Mladic, suddenly appear to be engaged in a full-fledged high-stakes power struggle.) In The Hague, meanwhile, the sole trial currently under way—that of a relatively insignificant Bosnian Serb named Dusko Tadic—appears to be headed toward acquittal, at least on some of the more sensational charges. Such an outcome, while something of a setback for the prosecution, would be a powerful affirmation of the entire Tribunal's fairness and impartiality—a point that will be amplified in the months ahead as the Tribunal's next big cases get under way: the trial of a Bosnian Croat general and that of three Bosnian Muslims and a Croat charged with atrocities against Serb prisoners. Those trials will make it harder for the indicted Serb leaders to rile their populations with visions of the Tribunal as a rabid anti-Serb conspiracy. Moreover, ordinary Bosnian Serbs and Croats may chafe under economic constrictions occasioned by the continued presence of the war criminals in their midst. NATO and the Clinton Administration, for their part, cannot much relish the possibility that after a year and a half more of allied military presence in Bosnia indicted war criminals will still be walking around free, and continuing to do everything in their power to subvert the implementation of all the other provisions in the Dayton peace plan. Still, it's hard to imagine the "I-Five" force suddenly becoming eager to carry out a task that twice as many heavily armored IFOR troops shrank from for almost a year.

• •

In this context, it's worth recalling the origins of the Hague Tribunal. "This Time We Knew" is the title of a recent collection of essays on what the book's subtitle spells out as "Western Responses to Genocide in Bosnia." This time we knew—and we stood by, palsied, for months and years as hundreds of thousands died and thousands were raped and millions of refugees swarmed across our nightly newscasts. Moreover, we did so despite our steadfast earlier resolve "never again" to countenance this sort of ethnic carnage, and surely not in the heart of Europe. Vukovar, Sarajevo, Srebrenica: we knew, and our leaders knew, and we—they—hardly lifted a finger. It was out of the resulting sense of shame that the notion of a Tribunal first arose: at least, we assured ourselves, the perpetrators of these horrors would someday be held to account. *We* would hold them to account: there would be no impunity for such barbarity. That is what the invention of the Tribunal "enabled Washington to claim." (The phrase, in a slightly different Bosnian context, was used by Michael Dobbs, writing in the Washington *Post*, and it's marvellously apt: note the layers of remove—not, say, "entitled to state" but, rather, *enabled* to *claim*—and the subtle nod to the language of codependency.) The creation of the Tribunal enabled Washington—and Paris and Bonn and London—to claim that we in this generation were not craven, hesitant, involuted appeasers in the mold of Munich 1938 but, rather, resolute and worthy heirs to the prosecutors of Nuremberg 1946.

At a certain point, though, mere claims, no matter how solemnly pronounced, begin to ring false. In The Hague these days, we are fast approaching such a point. Minus any further arrests (and soon), all of us—leaders and citizenries alike—may be leaving the land of "enabling Washington to claim" and drifting inexorably toward that of "forcing historians to conclude."

—LAWRENCE WESCHLER

1996 Estee Lauder Inc.
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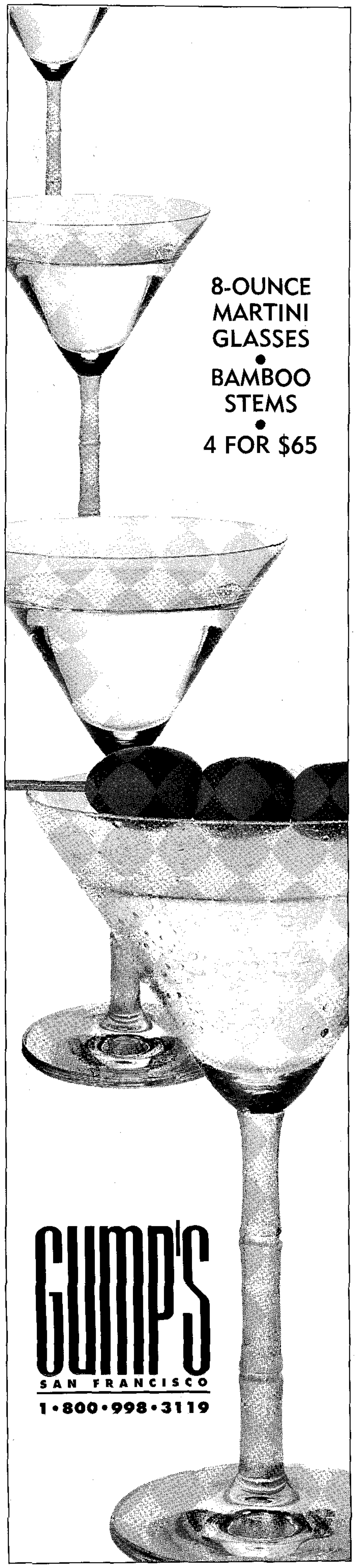

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IN THE MAIL

THE POLITICIANS WE DESERVE?

If Irving Kristol is, as his friend George Will contends, *the* public philosopher of our time, we are indeed "looking into the abyss," to borrow from Gertrude Himmelfarb ("The Family Way," by Jacob Weisberg, October 21st & 28th). Kristol is not merely the father of neoconservatism. He is also a godfather of neoracism, via his protégés Charles Murray and Dinesh D'Souza, and he enthusiastically nourished the Reagan deficits, the demonization of liberals, antigovernment hysteria, and crackpot fundamentalism. Mr. Weisberg points out the contradiction underlying contemporary conservatism as it is defined by the Kristols: that it celebrates free-market capitalism while lamenting the decline of traditional values—values that the commodity-driven culture itself efficiently erodes. This contradiction is hardly mysterious. Given the assortment of right-wing foundations that have supported the Kristol family enterprise, all the misdirection, vituperation, and hubris coming from the Kristols' corner appear to be no more than disingenuous moralizing in support of the narrowest and most obvious self-interest.

BRUCE SCHMIECHEN
San Francisco, Calif.

Spare me reference to the religious adolescence of George Stephanopoulos ("Curious George," by David Remnick, October 21st & 28th). Likewise his Rhodes scholarship and the part about the idealist working in soup kitchens. The great pity of the Stephanopoulos saga is that we are all much the poorer if this is how our "best and brightest" choose to squander their personal and intellectual resources. Stephanopoulos has more of the characteristics of Dick Morris than he is willing to admit.

GARRY ORRILL
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Why is a trivializing satire on clothing almost all there is in your special Politics Issue about two brilliant women—Hillary Clinton and Elizabeth Dole—who continue to have an impact in the political arena? Among the few other women mentioned are Cleta Mitchell (who has stopped running for public office), Nancy Johnson (who is discussed because of her association with Newt Gingrich), and Betty Friedan (who stands on "tippy-toes"). The issue is distressingly accurate in its portrayal of serious politics in America, which still largely means "Gentlemen Only Ladies Forbidden."

JENNIE CONGLETON
Dallas, Pa.

I'm puzzled. How did Michael Oakeshott get to be so famous stating what seems to be about fifty per cent obvious and fifty per cent wrong ("A Man Without a Plan," by Adam Gopnik, October 21st & 28th)? Surely it's obvious that you don't get elected in a democracy by running on abstract, rational principles. And it's also obvious that politics is a purely practical undertaking, and that one of the practical rules is not to get too far out of step with your constituents. But isn't it wrong to suggest that politicians do better if they forswear ideas or plans? Did Franklin Roosevelt get elected four times or Ronald Reagan twice without a plan? And isn't the lack of ideas one of the reasons that this year's Presidential election drew the lowest voter turnout since Calvin Coolidge's, in 1924? If Oakeshott is indeed "the most important conservative political philosopher of the century," I wonder about the future of political philosophy.

ROGER S. KUHN
Bethesda, Md.

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Anne Frank and Me—The American Jewish Theatre begins its season with a drama by Cherie Bennett, in which a cynical teen-age girl travels back in time to Nazi-occupied Europe and meets the young diarist. In previews through Dec. 1. Opens Dec. 2 at 8 and continues through Dec. 15. (307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

Dreams & Nightmares—The illusionist David Copperfield comes to Broadway, in a show written by David Ives. In previews. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Henry VI, Parts I, II, and III—The New York Shakespeare Festival presents the trilogy, which will run in repertory as "Part 1: The Edged Sword" and "Part 2: Black Storm." In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

Insurrection: Holding History—Robert O'Hara wrote and directed this new time-travel comedy, set in Southampton, Virginia, during the slave uprising led by Nat Turner. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

Once Upon a Mattress—Gerald Gutierrez directs Sarah Jessica Parker in a revival of the 1959 musical, based on "The Princess and the Pea." In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Permanent Brain Damage (Risk It! Risk It!)—The latest musings on human consciousness from Richard Foreman and his Ontological-Hysteric Theatre. Opens Nov. 28 at 8. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

The Seven Streams of the River Ota—Robert Lepage wrote and directed this eight-hour multimedia examination of the Holocaust and the AIDS epidemic. Presented by the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Seven two-part performances only (three as marathon performances, four presented over separate evenings), opening Dec. 1 at 3 and continuing through Dec. 14. (Majestic, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. For more information, call 718-636-4100.)

Sharps, Flats & Accidentals—The Flying Karamazov Brothers blow into town with a new show of music-related jugglery. Opens Nov. 29 at 7. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Tooth of Crime (Second Dance)—Sam Shepard's new version of his 1972 drama about a rock star past his prime, with a new star, Vincent D'Onofrio, and new music, by T-Bone Burnett. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

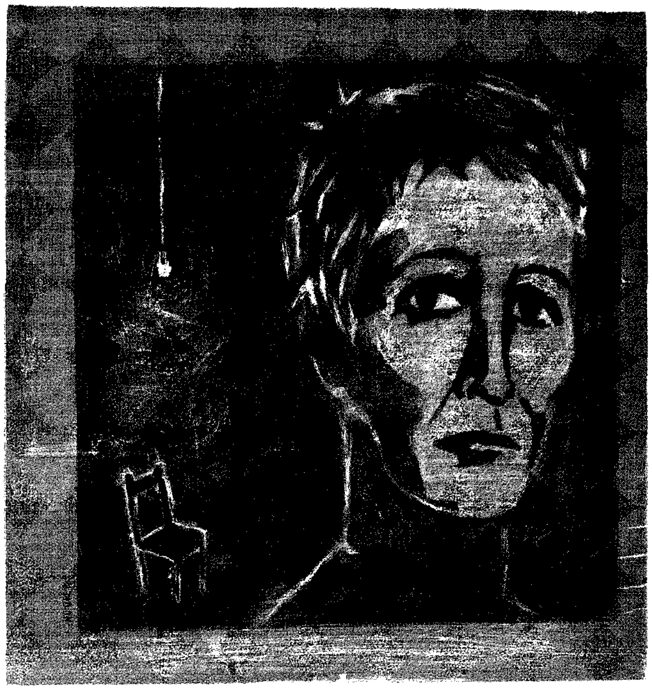
OPENED RECENTLY

Beat: A Subway Cop's Comedy—John DiResta, New York City transit policeman and stand-up comic, files a report on his subterranean workplace. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Born to Sing!—The sequel to the long-running "Mama, I Want to Sing!" You couldn't find a better introduction to gospel without going to church. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700. Closes Dec. 1.)

A Brief History of White Music—A comic revue by Dee Dee Thomas and David Tweedy, in which an all-black cast interprets the music of Sonny and Cher, the Beach Boys, the Beatles, and other honkies. (Village Gate, 240 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

Cakewalk—The subject of Peter Feibleman's play, his twenty-year relationship with Lillian Hellman, is one he's mined before—in his 1988 book "Lilly," on which the play is based. Feibleman may think he's doing history a favor by presenting Hellman as he saw her, but his version of the truth is unseemly and self-serving, and it only reinforces her image as a boilerplate celebrity intellectual. As Hellman, Linda Lavin gets off some good ones, but she seems almost too healthy, emotionally and physically, to play the poison-filled, self-promoting playwright. Michael Knight, the author's stand-in, is blandly charming and, unlike any writer we know, has the body of a lifeguard. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/18/96.) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)



Fiona Shaw, in "The Waste Land."

Chicago—The long-legged Ann Reinking is the ingénue Roxie Hart, a role she played at one point in the original 1975 production; Bebe Neuwirth is streamlined and sardonic as her man-killer sidekick; and the angular chorus line, in skimpy black, is as stunning and hard-edged as Bob Fosse's dances. Walter Bobbie's bookless, setless revival of the Kander-Ebb-Fosse extravaganza of cynicism (choreographed by Reinking this time around) has enough razzle-dazzle and flashes of lucid sarcasm to set the audience cheering almost from the start. The story is about a woman who gets away with murder; this pared-down concert posing as a full-dress musical may do the same. (11/25/96) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

The Cocoanuts—The American Jewish Theatre's revival of the Irving Berlin–George S. Kaufman musical that starred the Marx Brothers in 1925. The songs are pleasant enough, but it's the laugh-out-loud comedy that really scores. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Cymbeline—Shakespeare's late play has young love misunderstood, a lady wronged, a kidnapping, political intrigue, and several tricks the playwright recycled from earlier, better works. Familiar as all this stuff is, the Pearl Theatre Company's production is great fun, and Kathleen McNenny, as the wronged lady, and John Wylie, as her aged servant, are charming enough to make it matter. Directed by Shepard Sobel. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes Nov. 30.)

The Entertainer—John Osborne's bitter pill of a play about a faded music-hall performer in a faded British seaside town was given perfect form in the 1960 movie version, which Tony Richardson directed and Laurence Olivier starred in as Archie Rice. It's a tough act to follow, and this production, directed by David Esbjornson and starring Brian Murray, doesn't have the stuff: it's unfocussed and never really gels. Murray is certainly touching—as always—but he may have too much warmth as an actor to be able to paint a convincing portrait of hardened despair, and Jean Stapleton, who was, of course, just right as that *other* Archie's wife, seems miscast as this one's. Douglas Seale, as Archie's cranky but dignified father, is the only cast member who seems to hit just the right notes. (136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes Dec. 8.)

Family Values—A sex comedy by the Canadian playwright Carl Ritchie. Ed (Joel Fabiani) is a blustery podiatrist who longs for the days when his ex-wife (Ellen Evans) would rub his feet for hours on end; he also wishes that his son weren't, as he puts it, a "fruit," and that his daughter weren't "boinking" her boyfriend. Daniel Ettinger's set, an apartment awash in chintz, is much more tasteful than the sitcomlike proceedings. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 358-5174.)

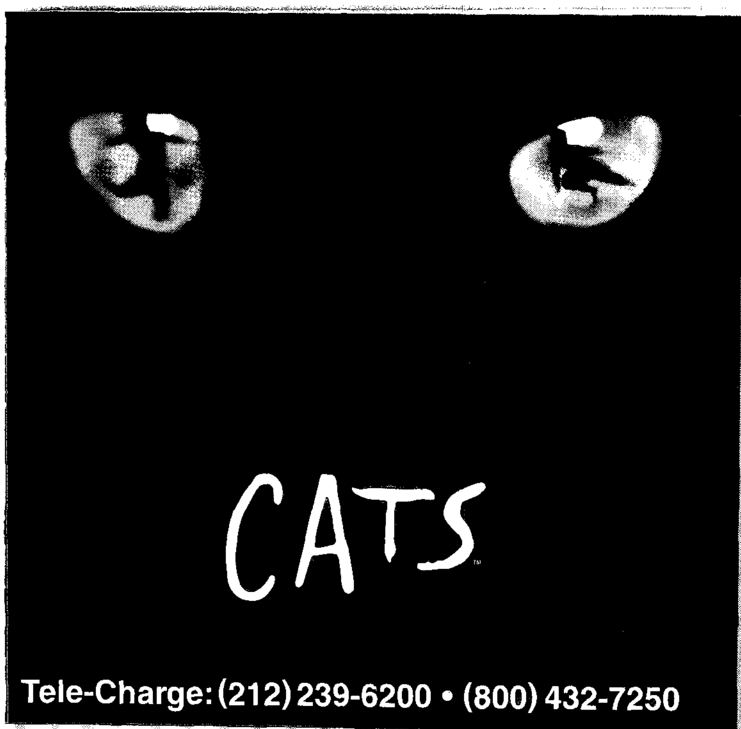
Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back!—Gerard Alessandrini cuts a satirical swath through the Great White Way in a new edition of his musical parody. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Full Gallop—The legendary, vividly eccentric fashion editor Diana Vreeland is the subject of Mary Louise Wilson and Mark Hampton's one-woman play, in which Wilson stars. Set in 1971, shortly after Vreeland was fired from *Vogue*, it's very funny and very moving. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

God Said, "Ha!"—In her new one-woman show, the comic Julia Sweeney, departing from her "Saturday Night Live" persona, gives an account of the year her life seemed too good to be true—because it was. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Golden Child—The latest from the pen of David Henry Hwang, a drama set in China in 1918. Directed by James Lapine. (Reviewed

HADLEY HOOPER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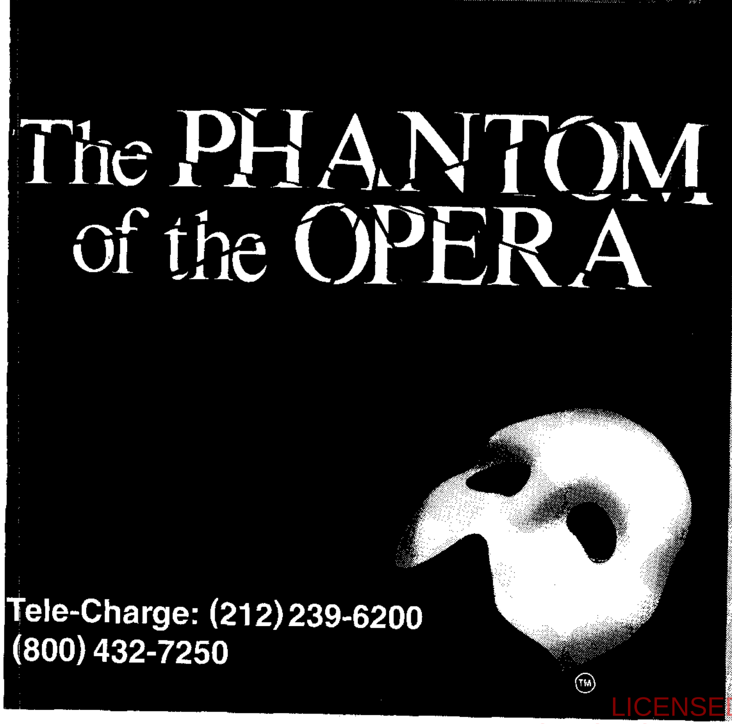
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INSTRUMENTS FOR PROFESSIONALS

in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Dec. 1.)

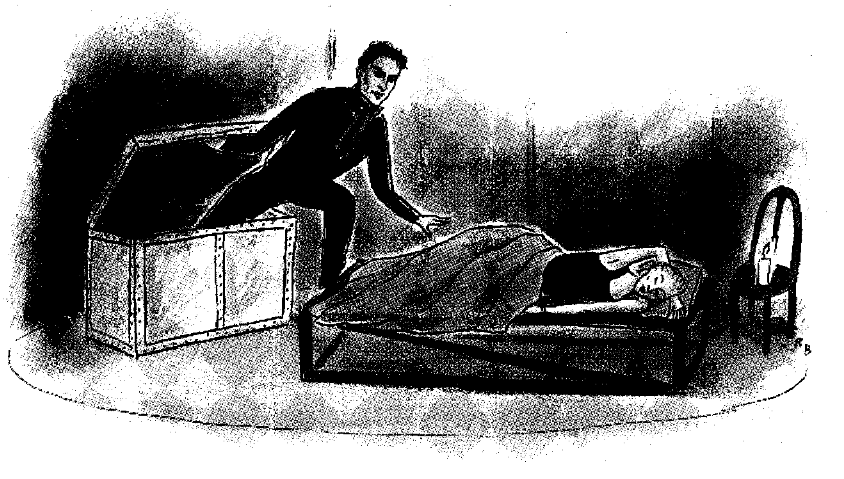
Howard Crabtree's When Pigs Fly—The exuberant designer Howard Crabtree died in June, and this revue of witty, satiric songs (created with and written and directed by Mark Waldrop, and sung by a talented cast dressed in Crabtree's sequinned, feathered, mind-boggling costumes) is a fitting cap to his career. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change—In made-for-musical-theatre voices, the appealing cast of Joe DiPietro and Jimmy Roberts's crowd-pleasing revue about love and marriage sings songs examining made-for-musical-theatre issues. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

The Importance of Being Earnest—This very pleasing and intimate production of Oscar Wilde's nonpareil comedy marks the designer Tony Walton's New York directorial début, and he has assembled an excellent cast for the occasion. An Irish Repertory Theatre production. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Dec. 22.)

It's a Slippery Slope—With his new monologue, Spalding Gray continues to live out every neurotic New Yorker's dream: getting paid rather than charged for going on and on about his problems (and getting famous doing it). He uses learning to ski as a metaphor for his plummeting-downhill feelings about fatherhood, leaving his wife after fathering a child with another woman, the death of his own father, and other life "passages." He's so smooth and wry that you absolve him for his crappy behavior (it's part of a *learning* process), thereby absolving yourself, and that, of course, is where his appeal lies—but you still have to pay for it. Sundays and Mondays at the Vivian Beaumont. (Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Joe Turner's Come and Gone—August Wilson's powerful play, set among African-Americans in a Pittsburgh boarding house in 1911, is about ties that bind and ties that are sundered, by blacks themselves and by racist whites. Arthur French, as a mojo man, and Mike Hodge and Peggy Alston, as the respectable boarding-house owners, all stake their turf compellingly. The rest of the cast is also riveting, and Clinton Turner Davis's direction is both clear and funny. The New Federal Theatre Company produced. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 353-1176. Closes Dec. 1.)



Brian G. Kurlander and Kathleen McNenny, in "Cymbeline."

ROXANNA BIKADOROFF

Joseph Gabriel: Magic on Broadway—Mr. Gabriel has performed at the Las Vegas Flamingo Hilton for the past ten years, and his feats are certainly impressive, but it's all too clear from the trappings of his act—dancers in polka-dotted boxer shorts, a sequinned Elvis—that he hasn't left Nevada behind. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Juan Darién: A Carnival Mass—Julie Taymor and Elliot Goldenthal's 1988 play. Directed by Ms. Taymor. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Late Nite Catechism—Maripat Donovan offers a commanding performance as the lone nun in charge of an adult catechism class, and the audience brings as much to the performance as the script does. It's hard to keep from laughing, though you may face a reprimand or two in the process. (St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

The New Bozena—Three very funny young clowns, all alums of N.Y.U.'s graduate acting program, who approach life with hilarious innocence and touching wonder. One quivers with fear and timidity, one is gape-mouthed and a little slow, and one has a catlike curiosity—although a cat probably wouldn't try out a staple gun on its tongue. Watching them is like watching babies discover the world. (11/18/96) (Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

Nine Armenians—Leslie Ayvazian's new work, a multigenerational family drama, was inspired by memories of her immigrant-scholar grandfather. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Old Wicked Songs—Jon Marans' well-written piece of sentimental sanctimony asks the question: Can a blocked, arrogant twenty-five-year-old pianist find wisdom under the tutelage of a suicidal singing teacher who survived the Holocaust? (The answer is yes.) (9/16/96) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Present Laughter—As the West End star Garry Essendine, who struggles to keep at bay both his own monumental ego and the swarm of fans who surround him, Frank Langella keeps the core of Noël Coward's 1939 comedy of bad manners alive with a full-tilt assault on Essendine's outrageousness. Unfortunately, the director, Scott Elliott, seems to think that he's liberating Coward by turning the play into a bisexual romp. But he orchestrates some delicious farce moments, and the supporting players—including the excellent Tim Hopper, the astringent Lisa Emery, and the sophisticated Allison Janney—are funny even when Elliott is leading them down blind alleys. (11/25/96) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Queen of Bingo—It's Bingo Night at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, in Battle Creek, Michigan; Sis (Carmen Decker), an aging devotee of the game, and Babe (Nancy-Elizabeth Kammer), her chubby younger sister, play a few rounds, make catty remarks about their fellow-competitors, and, alas, have an emotional catharsis. (Babe: "I'm fat! I'm fat! I'm fat!" Sis: "Fat people have the right to live, too.") The actors, particularly Decker, do fine, considering what the writers, Jeanne Michels and Phyllis Murphy, have given them, and the audience gets to play a round for a frozen turkey. (Greenwich House Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 239-6200.)

The Red Devil Battery Sign—Elizabeth Ashley and James Victor star in Tennessee Williams's 1975 drama, set in Dallas after the assassination of President Kennedy. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523. Closes Dec. 1.)

The Rehearsal—The Roundabout Theatre Company presents Jean Anouilh's play, in a production directed by Nicholas Martin. (Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

The Santaland Diaries—The writer David Sedaris has turned his piece about working as an elf at Macy's one Christmas into a monologue, but the material works much better on the page than it does on the stage. Timothy Olyphant is the sardonic elf; Joe Mantello directed this little slip of a show. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

Skylight—The playwright David Hare's success and his social conscience are still at odds. This time, the inimitable Michael Gambon plays a successful entrepreneur, and the powerful, appealing Lia Williams is his beloved former mistress, who has given up the lush life to teach the underprivileged. Their differences are factored out as systematically as an algebraic equation. (9/30/96) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

A Soldier's Play—Charles Fuller's Pulitzer Prize-winning 1982 play gets a powerful revival in the second production by the new Valiant Theatre Company. Clinton Turner Davis has directed this show—about the murder of a black Army sergeant in Louisiana in 1944—with the same clarity he brought to the New Federal's current "Joe Turner's Come and Gone," leaving room for the telling pause, the character-encapsulating gesture, and the humor that make the drama much more than an exploration of the many issues it raises. Sean Squire and Keith Randolph Smith stand out in a strong cast. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 8.)

The Springhill Singing Disaster—Karen Trott plays all the roles, and all the guitars, in her comedy about the tribulations of a calamity-ridden folksinger, which was seen last season at Playwrights Horizons. Directed by Lonny Price. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Taking Sides—Ronald Harwood's play, part fact and part fiction, stars Daniel Massey as the conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler and Ed Harris as an American Army officer who interrogates him about his alleged ties to the Nazis. (Furtwängler was cleared of all charges.) The play is little more than a pileup of pieties and platitudes; its approach to moral complexity is deeply shallow. (11/4/96) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

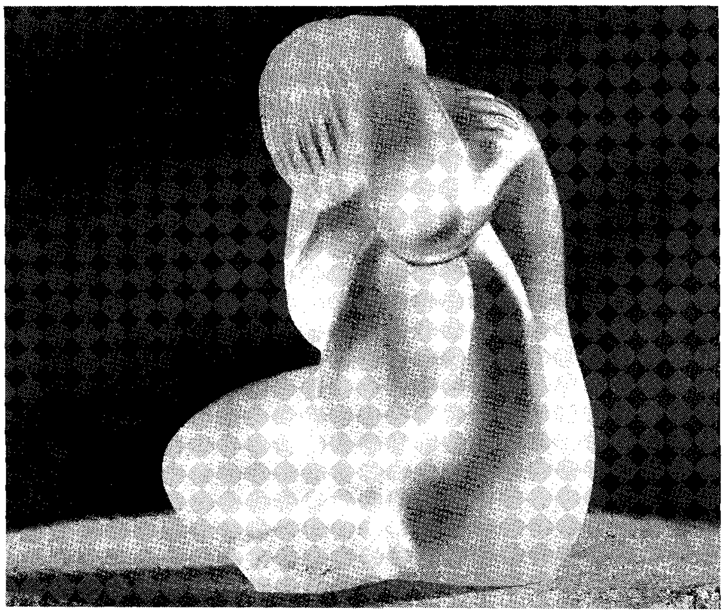
The Vagina Monologues—Eve Ensler performs her new one-woman show about, well . . . (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

The Waste Land—Sitting in a dark, dilapidated old theatre, we hear footsteps from the back of the house; Fiona Shaw climbs the stairs to the bare stage, twists in a light bulb, heads back toward the stairs—but then, as if deciding that speech is her only remaining option, she begins to recite. And, with the assistance of Deborah Warner's direction and Jean Kalman's minimal, evocative lighting, she makes a rich tapestry of T. S. Eliot's monumental poem, smoothly and believably animating the inhabitants of its "Unreal City" and giving us a glimpse of the whole from which these fragments have fallen. (Liberty, 234 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Dec. 15.)

When the World Was Green (A Chef's Fable) and **Chicago**—The Signature Theatre Company presents a pair of terrific one-acts by Sam Shepard (the first co-written in 1996 with the director Joseph Chaikin, the second from 1965) which are highlighted by two superb performances. In the new work, Alvin Epstein, as a prisoner who has killed the wrong man, creates a sad, reflective character who's pure poetry. In the second, Wayne Maugans plays a boy who is losing his girl; delivering a monologue from the bathtub that is part childish denial, part buffoonery, and part raw sex, he gives Shepard's reckless sixties language a juicy spin. The plays work well together, creating a world where loneliness is tempered by hip poetry and startling images. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes Dec. 15.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . .



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COWGIRLS: Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **AN IDEAL HUSBAND:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE KING AND I:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LOVE THY NEIGHBOR:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

DANCE

New York City Ballet—The company returns to the business of inspiring little girls in pigtails to dream of a life *en pointe*. The annual "Nutcracker" enchantment begins the day after Thanksgiving. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Nov. 29 at 8, Nov. 30 at 2 and 8, Dec. 1 at 1 and 5, and Dec. 3 at 6. "The Nutcracker" continues through Jan. 5.)

"The Remember Project"—Dancers Responding to AIDS and Positive Music set aside a day and a night for commemoration and performance (and Erik Satie) at Danspace Project. During the vigil's eight hundred and forty repetitions of Satie's "Vexations," dancers and performers will offer works and meditations on behalf of those who have died from AIDS-related causes. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. For more information, call Dancers Responding to AIDS at 840-0770. Dec. 1, from midnight to midnight.)

"Dancegiving"—The choreographer Henning Rübsam presents a selection of his own work, including the theriomorphic "Dolphins and Antelopes," and of works by fellow dance makers. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Nov. 29-30 at 8:30.)

"Split Stream"—Dance Theatre Workshop presents a program by two choreographers, Bob Eisen and Michelle Spencer. The Chicago-based Eisen performs "Quartet Variations Plus One" and "Memfigen." Among the works that Spencer offers are a recent dance monologue from David Dorfman's "The Family Project" and a new piece that she calls "Home Wrecker" (about a love triangle between a man, a woman, and a hamburger), and she admits to a similar method in both of them—a combination of hyperkinetic fragility and goofy, warp-speed self-revelation. Or, as she says, "I talk a lot and I dance a lot." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Nov. 29-30 and Dec. 2 at 8 and Dec. 1 at 3.)

Murray Louis and Nikolais Dance—Two programs: one devoted to recent choreography from Louis, the other to repertory works by the late Alwin Nikolais. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Nov. 27-30 at 8 and Dec. 1 at 7:30.)

"Insights Into OnSITE"—A sextet of site-specific choreographers uproot various projects (all sponsored by Dancing in the Streets) from their specific sites—Chinatown's Columbus Park, the Arthur Avenue Italian Retail Market, a community garden in East Harlem and one on the Lower East Side, a warehouse by the Gowanus Canal, and the Web—for an evening of excerpts at the Guggenheim Museum. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 423-3587. Dec. 2 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Kool & the Gang—Led by bassist Robert (Kool) Bell, they began their career in the mid-sixties as the Jazziacs; the band became a brand name with the addition of ultra-smooth lead vocalist James (JT) Taylor and mega-hits like "Ladies' Night," "Joanna," "Get Down on It," and the inescapable "Celebration." Taylor left to pursue a solo career in 1988, and the hits dried up. But for this occasion the group has reunited. A good thing, too: in its heyday, Kool & the Gang was one of the best live acts around. (Westbury Music Fair. 516-334-0800. Nov. 27 at 8.)

The Chemical Brothers, at the Roxy.

Chemical Brothers—On their fine 1995 début album, "Exit Planet Dust," this English duo, made up of d.j.s Tom Rowlands and Ed Simons, rose above the usual monotonous thump of techno by combining the tried and true grooves of funk, thick layers of rock guitar (digitally sampled, of course), and various other sonic weirdness. Their freestyle approach makes for orgasmic music that appeals to both dance-floor purists and mainstream rockers. The band's motto: "We want you to feel like you're on drugs, even when you're not." (Roxy, 515 W. 18th St. 307-7171. Nov. 27 at 10.)

Everything but the Girl—In 1994, after fourteen years and several fine albums, singer Tracey Thorn and multi-instrumentalist Ben Watt finally hit the big time with a clubby remix of "Missing," from their album "Amplified Heart." Unfortunately, that track's enormous success has overshadowed the duo's even better 1996 followup, "Walking Wounded," an album that, with serious nods to hip-hop, jungle, and Burt Bacharach, offers a classy rose-petal take on the music that's often sneeringly referred to as dance pop. Their crystalline wistfulness may lull some listeners, but ever so gently, like a perfectly mixed Martini. (Roxy. Nov. 29 at 8.)

Soul Coughing—Since the release of "Irresistible Bliss," their truth-in-advertising second album, six months ago, the members of this New York-based outfit have grown into the sort of blissfully irresistible pros who can make even the most restrained wallflowers dance like fools. The band's jaggedly ironic grad-school hip-hop is now so popular that it has given birth to a generation of Soul Coughing-inspired bands like Cake (see below) which are bringing Beat poetry to the suburbs of America. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Nov. 29 at 8.)

Tony Bennett—With his recent recording, "Here's to the Ladies," the kid from Astoria has outdone himself. Looking and sounding like a medieval courtier (he has long upheld the principles of courtly love in his ballad singing), he bends his knee to Doris Day, Lena Horne, Rosemary Clooney, Sarah Vaughn, and thirteen other noble women of song who over the years have thrilled and inspired him. In other, less gentlemanly hands, this could have been schmalz, but Bennett has never had to fake his sincerity. Besides, as the only great tenor in a field of baritones (Sinatra, Joe Williams, et al.), he's no doubt simpatico with singers in the higher ranges. (Westbury Music Fair. Nov. 29-Dec. 1 at 8.)

The Lemonheads—The life and chin of lanky, lank-haired singer Evan Dando continue to be the most interesting things about the Lemonheads (even though the band's new record, "Car Button Cloth," is a charming and entirely distinguished affair). His brief appearance in the film "Heavy," as Liv Tyler's surly, solipsistic boyfriend, was said to be a case of an actor's playing himself. Nevertheless, he continues to be one of alternative rock's finest songwriters, and he should be hot to prove it. (Roseland. Nov. 30 at 8.)

Counting Crows / Cake—Lead singer Adam Duritz still sounds like Van Morrison, and he has the kind of petulant ego that most pop stars take years to develop, but there's no getting around the fact that his band's début album, "August and Everything After," was an inspired collection of soulful, melodic rock. The group's second effort, "Recovering the Satellites," hit the charts at No. 1, but it lacks the charm of its predecessor. / The concept of charm is probably anathema to the members of Cake, a funky, low-budget combo from Sacramento which sounds like a cross between Soul Coughing and Pete Wilson. With all due respect to Soul Coughing, Cake's fast-breaking single, "The Distance," may be the most irresistible song of 1996. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Dec. 1-2 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **ANDREA MARCOVICCI** is currently in the midst of an extended run. Dining.

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—The legendary club has a new address and bigger digs, and Charlie Parker's name still shines proudly on the awning. T-shirts and sweatshirts are on sale in the gift shop. The black-and-white photographs of jazz greats are also for sale, so you can really savor the memories. Nov. 27-30: **TOM HARRELL.** Let's hope that Harrell's periodic partnership with saxophonist Joe Lovano has brought this superb trumpeter more of the attention that he deserves. His recent "Labyrinth" provides additional evidence that the incisive improviser is also a skilled and distinctive composer and arranger. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Dec. 1: The **MC COY TYNER** trio and the **JOHN SCOFIELD** quartet. A double bill not recommended to the faint of heart. The master pianist Tyner brings crashing chordal assaults and rampaging runs across the keyboard; guitarist Scofield is also apt to throw restraint to the wind, crowding his solos with tumbling blues and funky filigree. Starting Dec. 3: The **BLUE NOTE FIFTEENTH-ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION,** featuring **BETTY CARTER.** Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—After twenty-nine years at the Café Carlyle, **BOBBY SHORT** is polished to such a high gloss that he's almost blinding to behold. Everything he does is breathlessly paced: tempos accelerate, notes ascend, hands clap, teeth flash. His speech has the arcane ring that comes from travelling in glamorous circles: "You're a knockout!" "What an audience!" "How chic!" "Wow!" Just as your attention begins to flag, he shifts gears and does ten minutes of blues with cheeky conviction. But all his mannerisms really come into focus the minute he sings Cole Porter, which turns everything else into a warmup.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A sleek piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel. Dining.

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Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Dec. 1: The **STANLEY TURRENTINE** quintet. Starting Dec. 3: The **TITO PUENTE LATIN JAZZ ENSEMBLE.** Dining.

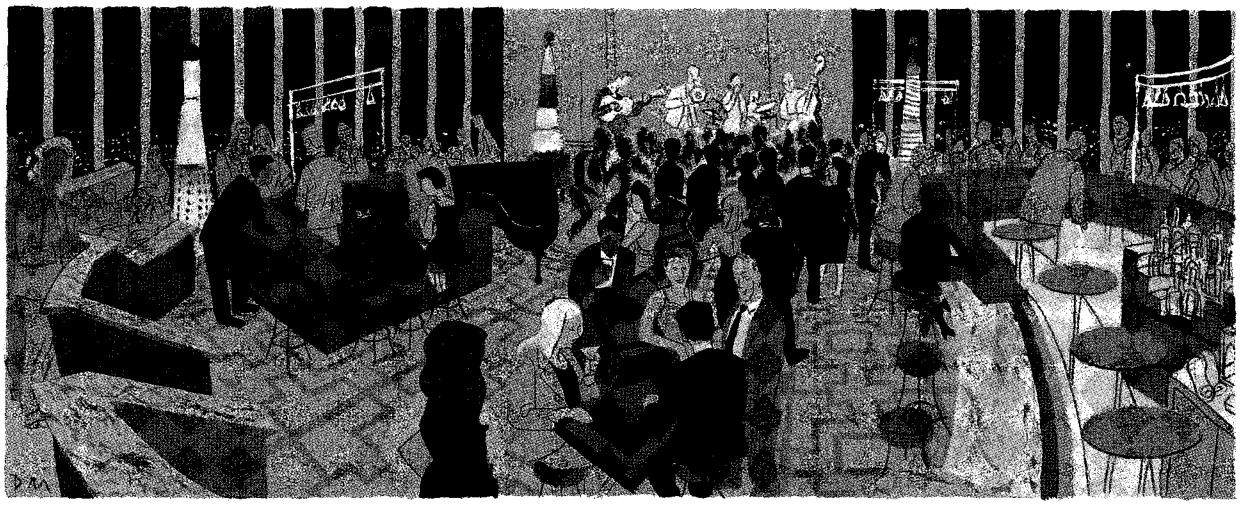
Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Nov. 27: **JOHN ZORN'S DURAS.**

Maxim's, 680 Madison Ave. (751-5111)—In 1985, Pierre Cardin spent millions to open this mock-nineteenth-century bistro, which features stained glass, bevelled mirrors, and inlaid ceilings. But the eighties ended, and the club went dark for five years. A new management has revamped the menu, lowered the prices, and "done away with the dress code." Nov. 28-30: Vocalist **MORGANA KING.** Dining.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. Comic **RITA RUDNER** is the star-in-residence. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—This aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night. Nov. 29-30: The Mike Wilner quintet.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A convivial and crowded jazz club where the musicians are always top-shelf. Dining.



A room with a view: the Greatest Bar on Earth, New York's highest night club, at 1 World Trade Center.

DAVID MAZZUCCHELLI

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—The Chestnut Room may resemble a hunting lodge decorated by Liberace, but the performances here are no joke. Dining.

Village Gate, 240 W. 52nd St. (307-5252)—Starting Dec. 3: **WARREN VACHE** is here to remind us that there was life in the trumpet long before bebop. A supremely lyrical player whose honeysuckle tone summons up Louis Armstrong, Bunny Berrigan, and Bobby Hackett, Vache pumps fresh blood into the classics.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Dec. 1: **TOMMY FLANAGAN.** The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. Through Nov. 30: Piano, bass, and guitar with **JOHN BUNCH, JAY LEONHART,** and **BUCKY PIZZARELLI.**

ROCK, ETC.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Nov. 27: **BO DIDDLEY.** Those pounding tom-toms, those sinewy maracas, that distorted, fuse-blowing guitar. Call it hambone, call it shave and a haircut, two bits, call it anything you want—it's still the Bo Diddley beat. And once it gets you in its clutches it's impossible to shake loose.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Nov. 29: Sometime Chuck Berry pianist **JOHNNIE JOHNSON.** Nov. 30: **JAMES COTTON.** There are only a handful of world-class blues-harmonica players, and Cotton is one of them. Tutored as a teen-ager by the legendary Sonny Boy Williamson II, he made his first recording for Sam Phillips's Sun Records in 1953 (as a member of Howlin' Wolf's band) and spent more than a decade as Muddy Waters's harp player during the golden age of Chicago blues.

Continental Divide, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, punks, poseurs, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. Live music nightly.

The Cooler, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—A lavender and stainless-steel vault deep in the heart of the meat district.

Don Hill's, 511 Greenwich St. (219-2850)—A tidy little SoHo bar with an above-average P.A. system and topnotch local bands on the docket. Friday night is SqueezeBox, a vinyl-and-velvet gay glamfest, hosted by Misstress Formika.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. S. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. The fabulous **DRESSING ROOM DIVAS** entertain every Saturday night.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—When **MADELEINE PEYROUX** (Nov. 27) performed in town last spring, at a Lincoln Center tribute to Duke Ellington, it was widely observed that the twenty-two-year-old singer seemed capable of channelling the spirit of Billie Holiday. With her jazzy phrasing and astonishing clarity, she does indeed recall Lady Day, but on her début album, "Dreamland," she also finds her way into the songs of Bessie Smith and Patsy Cline. With the incendiary folk singer **PATTY GRIFFIN.** The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

The Greatest Bar on Earth, 1 World Trade Center (524-7000)—Hyperbole, perhaps, but it's certainly the highest. And Thursdays through Saturdays you'll find live music, dancing, and dining, a hundred and seven stories above the city.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—This sprawling two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. Nov. 29-30: **FROM GOOD HOMES.** . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday. The dancers share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Nov. 30: The **WEDDING PRESENT.** This famed Leeds band, led by ace songwriter David Gedge, has never made it on these shores, but that hasn't stopped the boys from delivering a tome's worth of songs full of spiky wit and sharp melody, and guitar work that veers from jangle to jackhammer. They cruise into town for a rare gig, in support of their recent album, "Miniplus," a collection of joyful songs about cars.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-4064)—Born in Kansas and raised in Hoboken, **FREEDY JOHNSTON** (Nov. 29-30) has a knack for churning out exacting folk rock with a convincing Midwestern twang; his songs bristle with careful detail and piercing language. His mostly perfect "This Perfect World" captured a misshapen planet inhabited by broken folks pushed to desperate measures. He should know: he sold the family farm to support his career, an experience chronicled on his superior 1992 record, "Can You Fly" (which began with the line "Well, I sold the dirt to feed the band"). With **KEVIN SALEM.**

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Nov. 29: Former Throwing Muses and Belly front woman **TANYA DONNELLY.** Nov. 30: Eighties one-hit wonders ("Melt with You") **MODERN ENGLISH.** Dec. 2-3: **WILCO.** When the acclaimed country-punk group Uncle Tupelo disbanded, singer Jay Farrar went on to form Son Volt, while his former songwriting partner, Jeff Tweedy, gave the world the more charismatic Wilco. Tweedy's songs are less piercing than Farrar's tortured vignettes, but his band has a rare enthusiasm: with slithering fiddles, cranking guitars, and rootsy charm, they turn every gig into a hoedown.

Les Poulets, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and the occasional cha-cha. Dining.

Rodeo Bar, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—The walls simulate a log cabin, smoke blows through the nostrils of a buffalo head, a horse trailer has been converted into a bar, and you get peanuts for eating and, sometimes, throwing.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Nov. 27: **COMBUSTIBLE EDISON.** The first band to feature a signature drink recipe on a CD cover (two ounces brandy, one ounce Campari, one ounce fresh lemon juice; ignite brandy, pour into a shaker full of cracked ice, etc.), this self-proclaimed "suave and sybaritic" group is the most convincing of the new cocktail-lounge sophisticates. The music is a kitschy libation consisting of equal parts vibraphone, Farfisa organ, melodica, bossa-nova bongos, surf guitar (played by a besuited James Bond type called the Millionaire), and torchy vocals courtesy of Miss Lily Banquette.

Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

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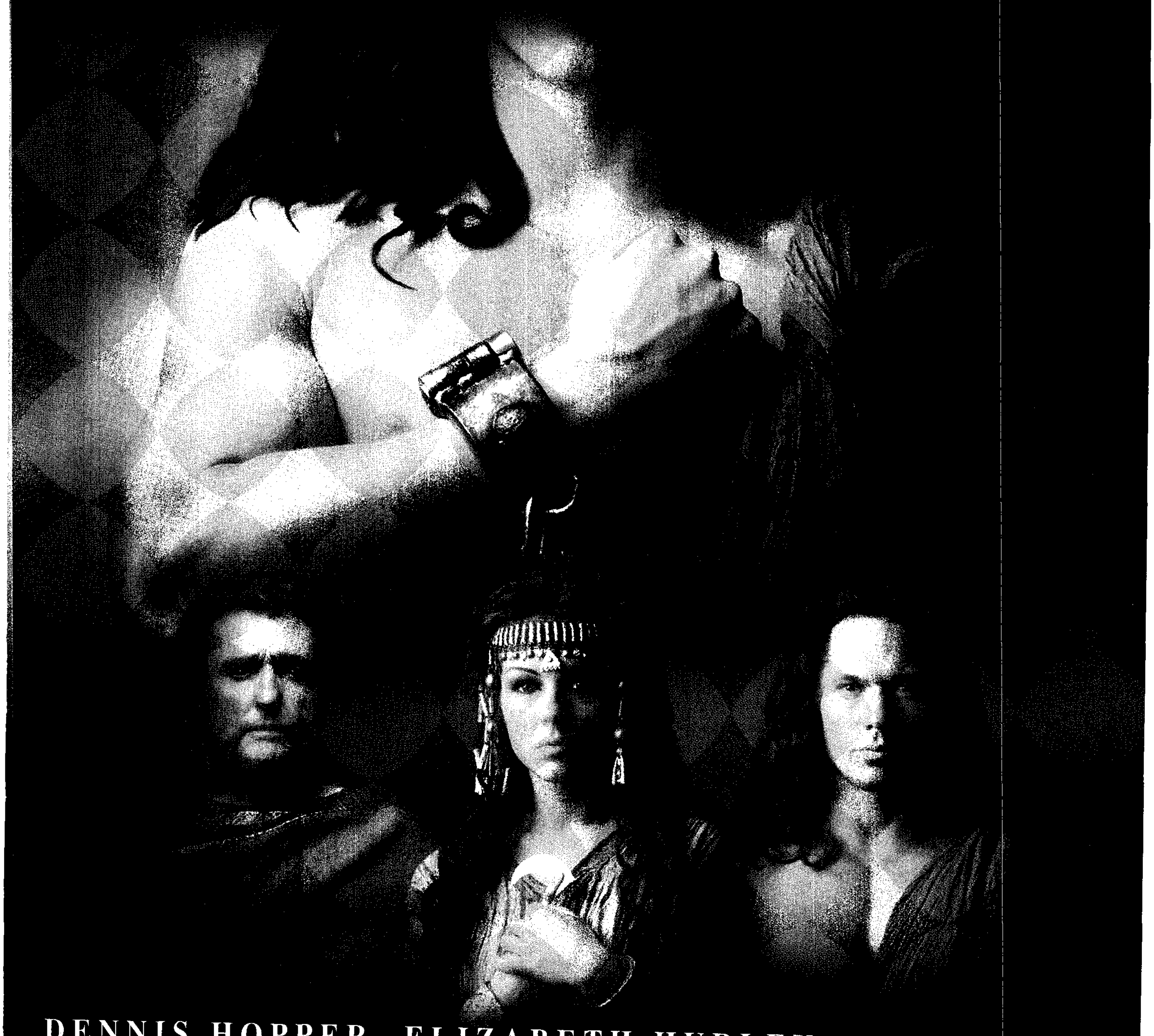

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ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

(All the museums and libraries listed will be closed Thanksgiving Day.)

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—The largest exhibition of the master landscape painter Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot mounted in more than a hundred years. Through Jan. 19. . . . ¶ "Masterpieces in Little: Portrait Miniatures from the Collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II." Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ The cynosure of a large exhibition surveying the career of the Scottish architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928) must certainly be the restored Ladies' Luncheon Room from Miss Cranston's Ingram Street Tea Rooms, in Glasgow. Through Feb. 16. . . . ¶ "Queen Nefertiti and the Royal Women" presents narrative reliefs and sculptures from Egypt's Amarna period (1353-1336 B.C.). A complementary reinstallation of sculptures, reliefs, and other objects is on view in the Amarna Galleries. Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ "Eugène Cuvelier, Photographer in the Circle of Corot," an exhibit of salted-paper prints from the eighteen-fifties and -sixties: streets and farmyards in the town of Barbizon, and exquisite, atmospheric views of the nearby Fontainebleau Forest. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ "No Ordinary Mortals: The Human and Not-So-Human Figure in Japanese Art," a survey from the Neolithic period through the twentieth century. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—The Jasper Johns retrospective features two hundred and twenty-five works—paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures—and naturally includes a few flags, targets, numerals, and cross-hatch patterns. Through Jan. 21. (A show of Johns's print work since 1960 is at Castelli, 578 Broadway, through Dec. 14.) . . . ¶ "Antonin Artaud: Works on Paper." Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ "New Photography 12" features work by Richard Billingham, Thomas Demand, Osamu Kanemura, Sophie Ristelhueber, Georgina Starr, and Wolfgang Tillmans. Through Feb. 4. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Ellsworth Kelly," a large survey of the artist's paintings, sculptures, works on paper, and photographs. Through Jan. 19. (For more Kelly, see Galleries—Chelsea.) (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St.—"Max Beckmann in Exile," a display of twenty-four paintings, including several large triptychs, by the German Expressionist who left his homeland in 1937, after he had been declared (along with many others) a "degenerate artist." Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York" presents works by Duchamp, Ray, and Picabia, along with those of other European and American artists associated with the movement, such as Jean Crotti, Arthur Dove, Charles Sheeler, Florine Stettheimer, and Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. Through Feb. 23. . . . ¶ "I'll Be Your Mirror," a retrospective of Nan Goldin's disturbing photographs of the gritty, glamorous downtown life. Through Jan. 5. (A concurrent show of Goldin's pictures of children is at Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St., through Dec. 21.) . . . ¶ "Views from Abroad: European Perspectives on American Art 2" draws from the collections of the Whitney and the Museum für Moderne Kunst, in Frankfurt. Among the artists represented are Stephan Balkenhol, Lawrence Weiner, Jenny Holzer, Charles Ray, and Robert Gober. Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ "Breuer's Whitney" includes drawings, photographs, models, and other objects chosen to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the opening of Marcel Breuer's gray granite upside-down ziggurat. Through Dec. 8. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

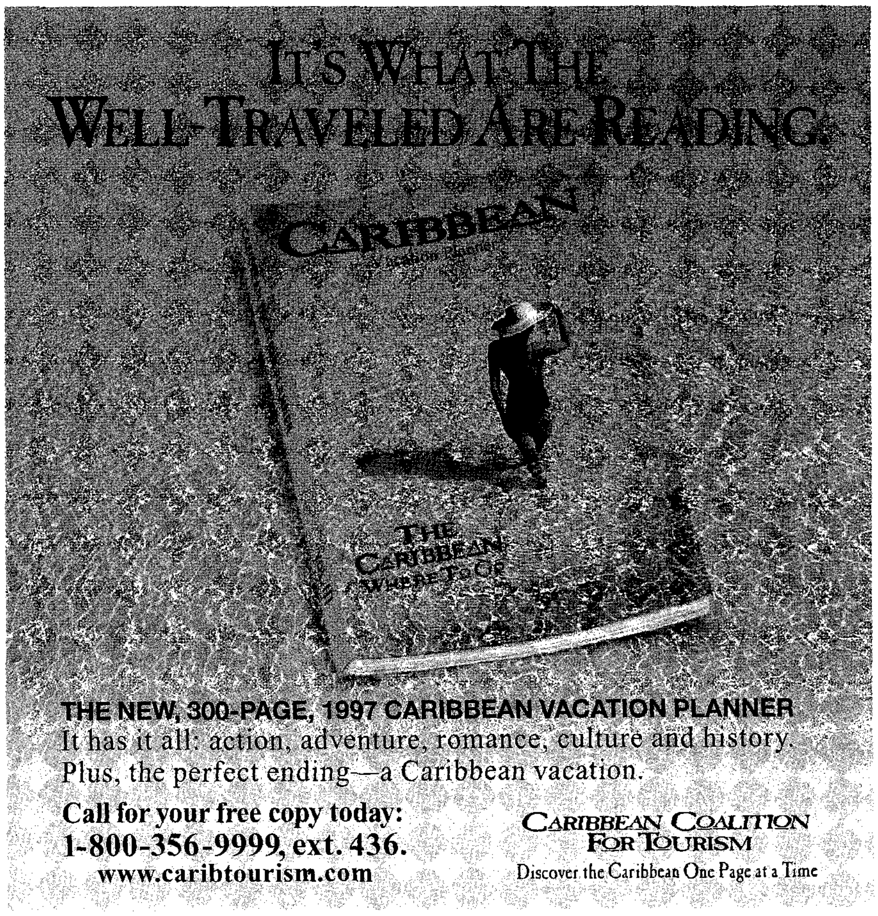
American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—A mid-career survey of glazed ceramic, bronze, and mixed-medium works by Michael Lucero. Through Feb. 16. (A show of new works by Lucero is at Beitzel, 102 Prince St., through Dec. 21; another survey is at Parrasch, 20 W. 57th St., through Nov. 30.) (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—"The Life of a Patron." This well-curated mixed-medium exhibition imaginatively re-creates the world of Zhou Lianggong (1612-72), an important art collector, biographer, and scholar. A government official in the Ming dynasty, he survived the Manchu invasion and dedicated himself to preserving the culture of the ancien régime. He began by collecting the works of highly individualistic artists such as Gong Xian, represented here by a 1671 album of stark, expressionistic landscapes. Zhou gradually came to appreciate more conservative artists, such as Wang Hui, whose superbly atmospheric hand scroll "Summer Mountains and Misty Rain" is on display. A few works of calligraphy by the patron himself are here, too, including a series of poems dedicated to the artists he collected and wrote about. Through Dec. 21. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

The Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"The Illegal Camera." The Nazi occupation of the Netherlands is best known to most of us through Anne Frank's diary, but another secret record of the era was made by Dutch photographers, both professional and amateur; a selection of their work has been gathered in this stunning exhibition. Through Dec. 15. . . . ¶ "From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage, and Power, 1600-1800." Through Jan. 19. . . . ¶ "Louis I. Kahn Drawings: Travel Sketches and Synagogue Projects." Through Dec. 15. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"A History of Women Photographers," a big show with plenty of obstacles to enjoyment, which nevertheless offers a chance to reconsider some of our notions about the male (and female) gaze. Two hundred and eighteen artists who put out work between 1850 and 1975 are represented. Well-knowns (Cameron, Abbott, Lange, Model, Levitt, Arbus) are in among near-unknowns (Sarah J. Eddy, Miss Eagle, Kate Smith), in thematic groupings (still-lifes, portraiture, documentary, fashion) that you basically just have to endure. The installation is slightly cramped (some pictures are hung in half or full shadow), and depth has been sacrificed for breadth (no artist has more than two prints). But go back a second time to linger over Lotte Jacobi, Ilse Bing, or Clementina, Lady Hawarden, and your objections will fade to cavils and maybe even slip away. Through Jan. 4. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall.) . . . ¶ "Artful Interiors: Rooms with a View" explores, through architectural books and design guides, the history of interior design from 1750 to 1950. (Salomon Room.) (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—"In the Spirit of Resistance: African-American Modernists and the Mexican Muralist School" explores the links between the two groups, as evidenced in the works of, among others, Charles Alston, Elizabeth Catlett, Jacob Lawrence, Celia Calderón, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Rufino Tamayo. Through Dec. 1. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)



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GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, uptown and downtown galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; Chelsea galleries are generally closed Tuesdays and open Sundays. They will all be closed Thanksgiving Day.)

Romare Bearden (1911-88)—Works in many mediums—silkscreens, lithographs, watercolors, oils on paper, and, mostly, collages—which explore the world of the Old South with funky humor and deep humanism. The best pieces are extravagant scenes of the artist's home, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, among them a series of collages depicting blues musicians jamming after a day of work in the fields. Through Dec. 14. (ACA, 41 E. 57th St.)

Eric Fischl—The artist takes his competent, harmless brand of surrealism into the realm of imagined Italian church interiors, where mildly incongruous things are going on. In "Once Where We Looked to Put Down Our Dead," a Boris Karloff-like brute carries a limp maiden through a chapel; in "Anger, Remorse, Fear, or Incontinence," a man stands in a dark crypt in front of a yellow puddle. "Confessions of a Mafia Don" introduces a note of Scorsesean immediacy, with the priest swirling across the foreground as the confessed sinner skulks away between the pillars. Through Dec. 21. (Boone, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

Gerhard Richter—The protean artist's endlessly ironic œuvre combines a realist mode based on photography and an abstract mode that looks weirdly mechanical: it's ultra-sophisticated and every bit as intelligent as it is sensuous. This show features recent paintings in both modes,

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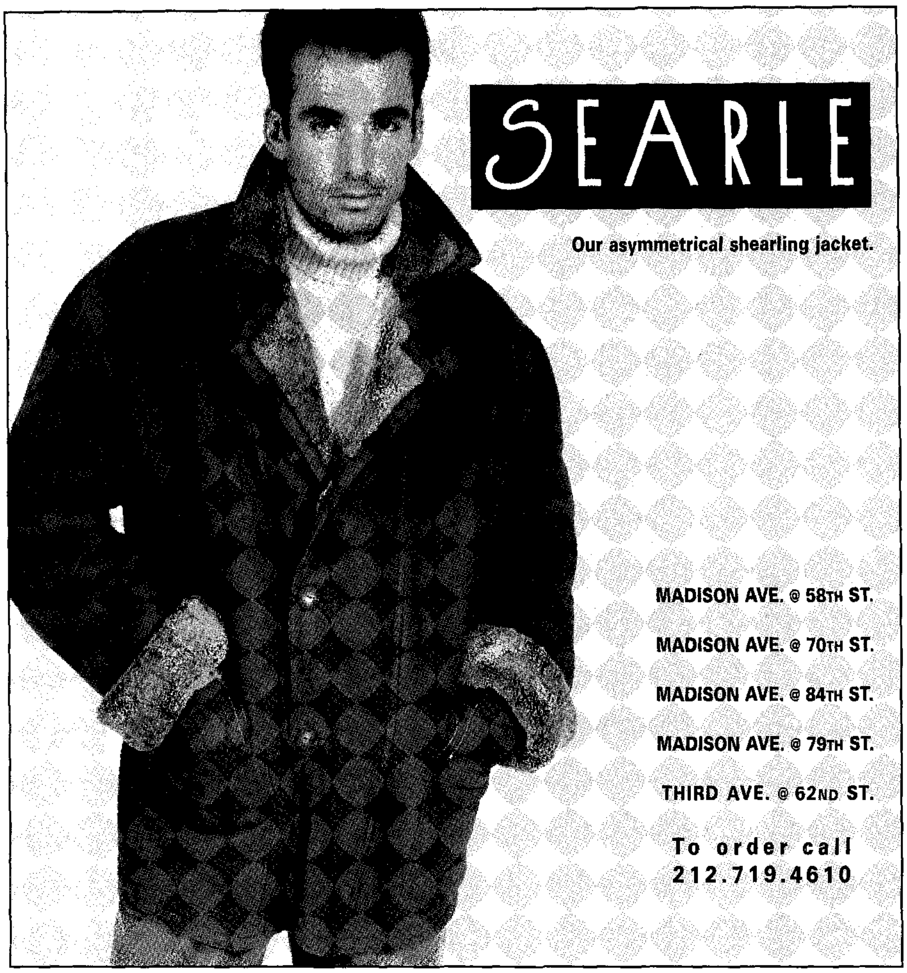
ONLY CONNECT

Jerry Rice World Wide Web Pages (http://neuro.fsu.edu/lowe/jerry-rice.htm)—Sports-fan Web sites are often just this side of embarrassing, prompting concern for the mental (or social) health of the individuals who built them. ("Maybe you should get out more often.") Every now and then you find one that is both informative and pleasing to behold. The Jerry Rice Web Pages, a tribute to the San Francisco 49ers' wide receiver, lovingly administered by Webmeister David Lowe, is just such a site. Frequently updated (Rice's N.F.L. record of a thousand receptions, set November 3 in a game against the New Orleans Saints, is celebrated here with pictures and audio) and statistically sound, this offering is better—and more entertaining—than most of the official N.F.L. sites.

Take the opening page: against a green gridiron, Rice's name appears in monumental, "Ben-Hur"-style lettering; every couple of seconds a little man appears with a ladder and a mop to polish the "R" in "Rice." A brief bio celebrates the career of football's touchdown leader (a hundred and sixty-three as of this writing), from his days at Mississippi Valley State to the quickest opening touchdown in Super Bowl history (a minute and twenty-four seconds into game XXIX). You'll find fan weirdness here, too, from the "virtual card shop," where you can buy, sell, and trade "the largest selection of Jerry Rice cards on the planet," to a life-size, gold-painted statue of Rice, shown astride two boxes of Wheaties. These pages are kid-friendly, with a special one on which Rice responds to questions from his younger fans. (Q: "Do you have a ritual before each game?" A: "Making sure I look good.") Best of all is the front-page video loop of Rice—the man with the ball, endlessly running.



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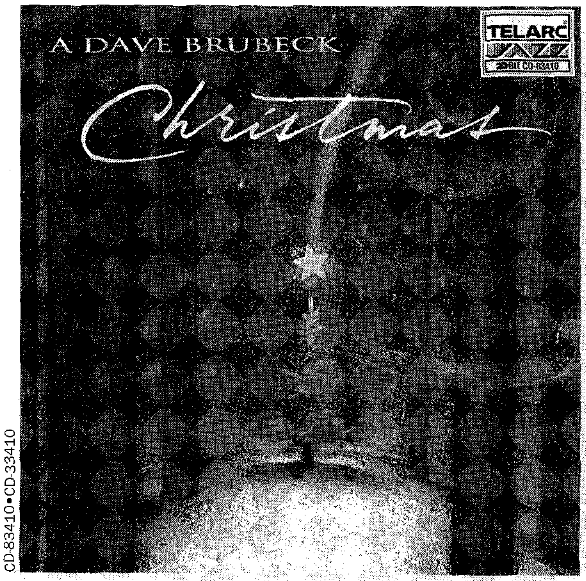

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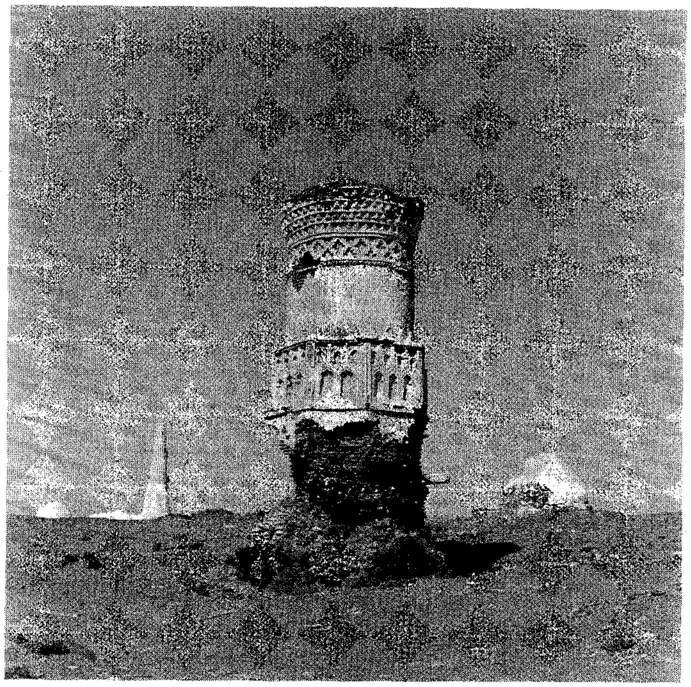

LYNN DAVIS: *"Minaret at Mocha, Yemen" (1996), at Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St., through January 4.*

Arid Beauty—The interplay of volume and form has defined Davis's work since the late seventies, when her unaffected nude studies started appearing in New York galleries. More ambitious explorations have followed, giving us wildly handsome portraits of icebergs, pyramids, Southeast Asian temples, and, now, ancient ruins gracing the deserts of the Near East. Solid masses of brick and stone—crumbling minarets, columns, a Syrian fortress—stand defiantly at the center of each selenium-toned silver print, surrounded by equally impressive volumes of air, clouds, and sunlight. Davis celebrates the tension between history and modernity—she often reveals encroaching electric towers and tourist signs. But pure desert landscapes are here, too, in the White Valley of Cappadocia and the upthrust terrain of Palmyra. Two magical pictures show glimpses of late-Roman façades carved directly into mountainsides in Jordan's legendary rock city of Petra. And the gallery will happily show you a bound volume with more of her exquisite views of Petra.

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most of them stunning. There's so much exhaustive virtuosity on display that you may feel like muttering "You win, you win" as you leave. Through Nov. 30. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Donald Roller Wilson—These amusing paintings of animals in fancy dress, doing strange and wonderful things, are all the rage in Hollywood: a new book of Wilson's work has prefaces by both Robin Williams and Carrie Fisher. The painter is skilled, even if his surrealistic vision isn't exactly deep and his whimsy is forced at times. Through Dec. 10. (Wright, 41 E. 57th St.)

"Pop Art: Then and Now"—This rather oddly assorted exhibition includes a few interesting rarities, such as "Stretcher Frame" (1968), a never-before-exhibited Lichtenstein, and the creamy-pink "Cotton Candy" (1963), a lovely, carefully painted canvas by Wayne Thiebaud. The Warholia includes a neat little self-portrait in green and a late, busy Campbell's-soup can. There are also works by Rosenquist and Rauschenberg, a tiny Wesselmann, and a fried egg by Oldenburg. Through Nov. 30. (Winston Wächter, 111 E. 65th St.)

Short List—**JOE ANDOE,** Helman, 20 W. 57th St. Through Dec. 14. . . . **RONALD BLADEN,** Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St. Through Dec. 21. . . . **ELAINE DE KOONING,** Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. Through Nov. 30. . . . **CAIO FONSECA,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. Through Nov. 30. . . . **ANDY GOLDSWORTHY,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. Through Jan. 4. . . . **HANS HOFMANN,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Through Dec. 7. . . . **JÖRG IMMENDORFF,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. Open Mondays; through Jan. 11. . . . **ALEX KATZ,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Through Jan. 4. . . . **REGINALD MARSH,** DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through Dec. 28. . . . **HENRI MATISSE,** C & M Arts, 45 E. 78th St. Through Dec. 7. . . . **ROBERT MOTHERWELL,** Long, 24 W. 57th St. Through Jan. 4. . . . **ARNALDO ROCHE,** Adams, at its new address, 41 W. 57th St. Through Dec. 21. . . . **LUCAS SAMARAS,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St., through Nov. 30, and 142 Greene St., through Dec. 14. . . . **GRETCHEN DOW SIMPSON,** Mary Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. Through Jan. 4. . . . **LEON POLK SMITH,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. Through Jan. 25. . . . **SUSAN SOLANO,** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through Jan. 14.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Stephen Mueller—Candy-colored psychedelia for die-hard enthusiasts of abstract painting. Mueller deftly creates dense, atmospheric clouds of luxuriant hues overlaid with more color in the form of crisp circles and ellipses that introduce a modest visual tension to otherwise laid-back pictures. The artist wants to convey a mystical feeling, but these works are just as well appreciated as late examples of color-field painting. Through Dec. 11. (Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays.)

"Open Secrets"—Thirty-five works on paper and an equal number of photographs by, among others, Degas, Pollock, Kahlo, Serra, Atget, Stieglitz, Sander, and Arbus. Through Dec. 28. (Marks, in its second Chelsea space, at 523 W. 24th St. Open Tuesdays; closed Sundays.)

Short List—**GARY HILL,** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. Open Tuesdays; closed Sundays; through Dec. 21. . . . **ELLSWORTH KELLY,** Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. Closed Wednesdays; opens at noon; through Jan. 19.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Teresita Fernández—The young Miami-based artist has built a recessed structure that, although pared down to its bare lineaments, distinctly suggests a swimming pool. A narrow walkway surrounds the empty basin; at the bottom is the gallery's concrete floor. The pale-blue sides give way to a graduated blue spray that creeps up past the waterline toward the ceiling, creating a gentle optical reverberation. The overall effect is quite beautiful, even poetic, and just a tad weird. Through Nov. 30. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. Opens at noon.)

Donald Sultan—Mixed-medium paintings and drawings whose circular and spherical motifs—baseballs, buttons, eight balls, film reels—address that overinvoked opposition of surface versus depth. Sultan's command of a wide range of painterly techniques is undeniable, but this show is a display of formal prowess without any discernible aim. Through Dec. 7. (Kasmin, 74 Grand St.)

William Wegman—New paintings and drawings that incorporate greeting cards and photographs as collage elements. No weimaraners here: most of these pictures are landscapes. Through Nov. 30. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.)

Franz West—This show of sculptures and installations by a prominent Austrian artist covers a lot of ground: pieces of furniture, papier-mâché sculptures, videos, and interactive objects. Self-conscious disarray seems to be the guiding principle. While the conceptual drive of West's art is elusive, its sensuous qualities are evident. Through Nov. 30. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St.)

Andrea Zittel—"A-Z Escape Vehicles," four customized trailerlike "pods" and one precustomized model that sits on a revolving platform. Zittel's sculptures, full of wit and visual charm, provide miniature but highly detailed individual fantasy spaces. Through Dec. 7. (Rosen, 130 Prince St.)

"Graphite Drawings"—Small works on paper by Lee Bontecou, Helmut Federle, Lee Lozano, Robert Moskowitz, Cary Smith, Myron Stout, and Robert Therrien. Through Nov. 30. (Markey, 55 Vandam St.)

"Plains Indian Drawings, 1865-1935"—A large exhibition of ledger drawings—works made on paper from bound books appropriated from white traders and officers—by artists from the Lakota, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Arapaho tribes. Through Dec. 21. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**IDA APPLEBROOG,** Feldman, 31 Mercer St. Through Dec. 7. . . . **WILLIE BIRCH,** Ross, 568 Broadway. Through Dec. 21. . . . **ALIGHIERO E BOETTI** and **KIM MAC CONNEL,** Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. Both shows through Dec. 21. . . . **DEBORAH BUTTERFIELD,** Thorp, 103 Prince St. Through Jan. 18. . . . **ROBERT COLESCOTT,** Kind, 136 Greene St. Through Jan. 4. . . . **FRANK DEGEN,** Leslie-Lohman, 127 Prince St. Opens at 1; through Dec. 21. . . . **ROBERT HECKES,** Postmasters, 80 Greene St. Through Dec. 21. . . . **GORDON MATTA-CLARK,** Fung, 537 Broadway. Through Dec. 14. . . . **YASUMASA MORIMURA,** Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. Through Jan. 4. . . . **RICHARD PETTIBONE,** Marcus, 578 Broadway. Through Dec. 21. . . . **BEVERLY SEMMES,** Klein, 40 Wooster St. Through Nov. 30. . . . **RICHARD SERRA,** Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. Through Dec. 14. . . . **ANNE WALSH,** Kaplan, 48 Greene St. Through Dec. 14.

PHOTOGRAPHY

"Festival of Women Photographers"—A loosely organized roster of some thirty shows, either already under way or coming up soon. The keystone is "A History of Women Photographers," at the New York Public Library (see Museums and Libraries). Other exhibitions are covered below.

Margaret Courtney-Clarke / Group Show—Straightforward, finely detailed color portraits of the Berber women of Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. The photographer skillfully captures their hard lives of weaving, farming, and hauling, tasks they perform shrouded in their own masterful textiles. / This well-chosen group of forty-five pictures by women photographers includes a Fulton Street dock scene by an uncharacteristically earthy Berenice Abbott, a hushed view of an adobe church by Laura Gilpin, and an ultra-grainy Lisette Model portrait of an unbothered big woman splayed

I have seen the tumbling seams of a 95 mph fastball.
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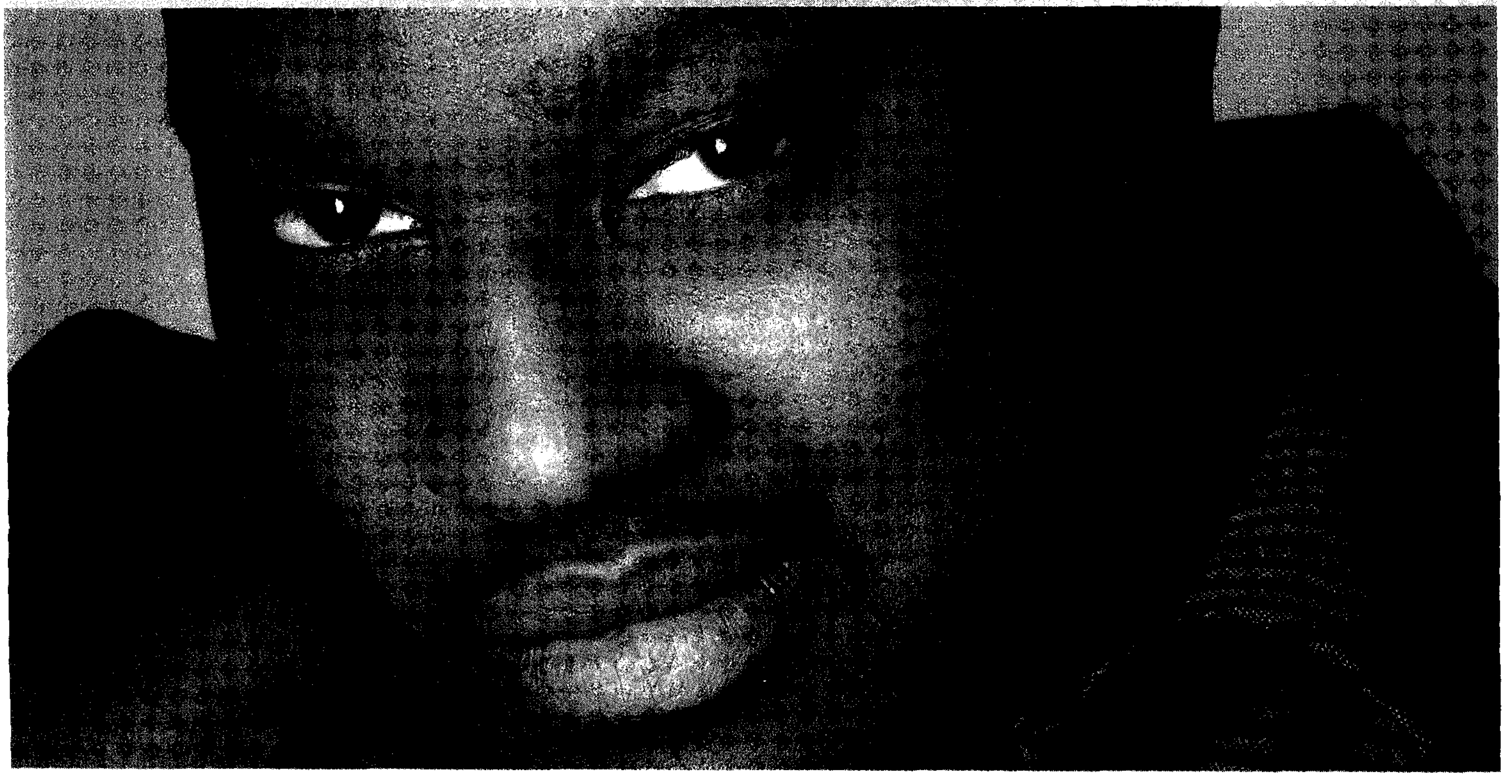

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on a Côte d'Azur bench. Both shows through Nov. 30. (Witkin, 415 West Broadway.)

Petah Coyne / Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–79)—Eighteen black-and-white prints by the sculptor, from four series: "Monks," "Piñata," "Carnival," and "Fourth of July, 1995." / Original albumen prints of Cameron's well-known portraits (including Mrs. Herbert Duckworth and Sir John Herschel), along with a group of allegorical studies. Both shows through Dec. 28. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St.)

Lisette Model (1901-83) / **Diane Arbus** (1923–71)—Well-known and virtually unknown vintage prints of vacationers on the Riviera, residents of the Lower East Side, and windows of New York storefronts. / "A Box of Ten Photographs," selected by Arbus (who was a student of Model's), includes some of her best-known portraits. Both shows through Jan. 11. (Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

Margaret Watkins (1884-1969)—In two years at Clarence White's school, Watkins moved from student to teacher; by 1919 she was making refined images that were amalgams of the pictorialist and modernist visions. Some of her design studies and still-lifes seem safe even by the standards of the day, and the nudes here are very demure, but a gentle wit and confidence inform all these vintage prints. (They include a couple of sharp advertisements for cheese and soap.) The decorum makes Watkins's best work all the more startling. In "The Kitchen Sink," she turns a quotidian basinful of dirty dishes into a delightfully loose melody. The warm-toned "Domestic Symphony" is a masterful marriage of off-center composition (it was deemed radical) with the delicate textures of porcelain, linen, and eggshells. Through Jan. 4. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St.)

"Pictorialism Into Modernism: The Clarence H. White School of Photography"—In courses at his own school, at Columbia University, and elsewhere, White (1871-1925) taught his students, the majority of them women, to cultivate "a sense of the beautiful." This show of more than a hundred works by his students and colleagues attests to their success. Laura Gilpin found ethereal beauty in Bryce Canyon, shown in soft focus under patchy cloud cover. Stella F. Simon found formal beauty in the corner of a room at the school's Harlem address. Paul Outerbridge, Jr., found slick beauty in a plate of cheese and crackers. Through Jan. 12. (International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

"Women of the Clarence White School"—In the beginning (ca. 1914), female students outnumbered males two to one. On view here are works by Doris Ulmann, Anne W. Brigman, Margaret Watkins, Margaret Bourke-White, Dorothea Lange, and others. Through Jan. 18. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St.)

Short List—**JUAN CARLOS ALOM,** Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. Through Feb. 1. . . . **MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE,** SoHo Triad Fine Arts, 107 Grand St. Open daily; through Dec. 8. . . . **ELLEN CAREY,** Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St. Through Dec. 21. . . . **LYNNE COHEN,** P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway. Through Dec. 21. . . . **JOHN DUGDALE,** Wessel O'Connor, 60 Thomas St., between Church St. and West Broadway; opens at noon; through Dec. 28. . . . **MITCH EPSTEIN** and **VERA LUTTER,** Wooster Gardens, 558 Broadway. Both shows through Dec. 28. . . . **LYNN GEESAMAN,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. Through Jan. 11. . . . **NAN GOLDIN,** Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. Through Dec. 21. . . . **LINDA MC CARTNEY** and **TOM WOOD,** International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; both shows through Feb. 9. . . . **FAWN POTASH,** Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. Through Jan. 18. . . . **JOHN WATERS,** American Fine Arts, 22 Wooster St. Through Nov. 30. . . . **ALEX WEBB,** Leica, 670 Broadway. Opens Saturdays at noon; through Dec. 7.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Jewish Museum, and the New York Public Library.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**COSÌ FAN TUTTE,** with Renée Fleming, Suzanne Mentzer, Marie McLaughlin, Paul Groves, Dwayne Croft, and William Shimell; conducted by James Levine. (Nov. 27 at 7:30 and Nov. 30 at 1:30.) . . . With Richard Stilwell instead of Mr. Schimmell. (Dec. 3 at 8.) . . . **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM,** by Britten, with Sylvia McNair, Nancy Gustafson, Jane Bunnell, Jochen Kowalski, Kurt Streit, Rodney Gilfry, and Peter Rose; David Atherton. (Nov. 29 and Dec. 2 at 8.) . . . **CARMEN,** with Angela Gheorghiu, Denyce Graves, Luis Lima, and Gino Quilico; Mr. Levine. (Nov. 30 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

Amato Opera Company—Nov. 30 at 11:30: A family performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Trial by Jury." . . . ¶ Nov. 30 at 7:30 and Dec. 1 at 2:30: "La Bohème." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200.)

"Agrippina"—Handel's sixth opera, premièred in Venice at the end of 1709 or the beginning of 1710, is one of the few he set to a libretto written expressly for the project. (Most of his librettos were off-the-rack items that other composers had already set.) Drawn from the histories of Tacitus and Suetonius, it involves the power plays that the title character effects to ensure that her husband, the emperor Claudius, will allow her son (his stepson) Nero to succeed him. Handel recycled much of the score—forty of its movements, in fact—from cantatas, serenatas, and similar light pieces he had written during the preceding four years; given the subject, one wonders if some of it originated in his long-lost 1705 opera "Nero," whose plot would have been a sequel to the action of "Agrippina." In what is apparently the work's first New York production, the Mannes Camerata (led by musical director Dongsok Shin) offers a staging by Drew Minter (heretofore better known as a countertenor than a stage director). (Cloister Theatre, Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. Dec. 1-2 and Dec. 5-6, all at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 580-0210, ext. 228.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Kurt Masur conducts a suite from Tchaikovsky's "Swan Lake," as well as three concertos featuring members of the orchestra: Eduard Tubin's Double-Bass Concerto (spotlighting Eugene Levinson) and Vivaldi's C-Major Piccolo Concerto (RV. 433, featuring Mindy Kaufman) and F-Major Concerto for Two French Horns (RV. 539, with Philip Myers and R. Allen Spanjer). (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Nov. 27, Nov. 29-30, and Dec. 3, all at 8.)

New York Treble Singers—Virginia Davidson directs the women's choir in her new work "The Joyful Song," written as a tribute to the hymnodist Fanny Crosby (1820-1915). Crosby certainly deserves tribute: born in Putnam County, New York, she went blind at the age of six weeks but compensated by developing an extraordinary facility for recall. Between 1864 and about 1900, she churned out some nine thousand hymn texts, usually Gospel-based, which she published under two hundred different pseudonyms. (That factors out to a hymn every weekday for thirty-six years.) Many of her poems are still sung today; her most enduring, perhaps, is "Blessed Assurance." Also on the program are works by Amy Beach, Margaret Bonds, Nancy Wertsch, Louise Talma, and Elinor Remick Warren. (Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Fifth Ave. at 55th St. Dec. 2 at 7:30.)

The "Messiah" Cometh—Two ensembles launch the "Messiah" season with performances of Handel's oratorio. Dec. 3 at 7: Musica Viva's annual sing-along, with Walter Klauss directing the choir, orchestra, soloists, and audience. (All Souls Unitarian Church, Lexington Ave. at 80th St. 794-3646.) . . . ¶ Dec. 3 and Dec. 5 at 7:30: Kent Tritle leads two gorounds in the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, with soprano Deborah Stephens, countertenor Bruce Rameker, tenor John McVeigh, and bass Charles Robert Stephens joining the church's choir and orchestra. (Park Ave. at 84th St. 288-2520.)

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra—Lorin Maazel conducts Mahler's Ninth Symphony. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Dec. 3 at 8.)

RECITALS

Bargemusic—Presenting chamber works for various combinations of strings, by Antonio Rolla, Saint-Saëns (his Fantasie for Violin and Harp), Spohr, Gluck, and Beethoven (his String Trio, Op. 8); with violinist Philippe Graffin, violist Toby Hoffman, cellist Rafael Figueroa, and harpist Deborah Hoffman. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. Nov. 28 at 7:30 and Dec. 1 at 4.)

Waverly Consort—The early-music group offers a wide-ranging program of French, English, Spanish, and Italian Christmas music from the tenth century through the fifteenth. (Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 650-2290. Dec. 1 at 1 and 3.)

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble—Performing Mendelssohn's String Quintet in A Major (Op. 18)

LISTENING BOOTH

Glad Tidings—Those who prefer their Christmas music Baroque (and we know who we are) get three stocking stuffers this year: Richard Marlow directing the Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, in Michael Praetorius's settings of Christmas chorales on **IN DULCI JUBILO** (Conifer Classics); Rinaldo Alessandrini leading the first-rate Concerto Italiano in Alessandro Scarlatti's **CANTATA PER LA NOTTE DI NATALE,** with Corelli's "Christmas" Concerto as a prelude (Opus 111); and a highly energized reading of Bach's **CHRISTMAS ORATORIO** (Berlin Classics)—modern instruments, but with historical sensitivity—in which Ludwig Güttler leads the Concentus Vocalis Wien, the Virtuosi Saxoniae, and top-flight soloists (including soprano Christiane Oelze and tenor Hans Peter Blochwitz) in a performance so resplendent that it stands with the best of the competition. If you're hankering for an album of standard carols sung operatically by a superstar, let it be Jessye Norman's **IN THE SPIRIT** (Philips); its profits benefit Balm in Gilead, the soprano's AIDS project. A soprano of a different stripe, the early-music singer Emma Kirkby, is the star of **ADESTE FIDELES! CHRISTMAS DOWN THE AGES** (Sony Classical), with the Westminster Abbey Choir; its little-known historical settings of familiar carols make interesting listening, though a few of the choristers fall short when pushed into the solo spotlight. Medievalists will swoon to Anonymous 4's cleanly sung **A STAR IN THE EAST** (Harmonia Mundi), a collection of Hungarian monody and polyphony, but they will find a less austere beauty (and probably even greater pleasure) in **NOVA STELLA: A MEDIEVAL ITALIAN CHRISTMAS** (Dorian), on which the Indiana-based Altramar Medieval Music Ensemble improvises around the tunes of the *laude spirituali* of Boccaccio's Tuscany. Glazunov's incidental music to the 1913 play **THE KING OF THE JEWS** (Naxos) proves itself worthy of rediscovery with a radiant performance by the Moscow Capella and Moscow Symphony Orchestra. Modern carols by British composers (Howells, Walton, Warlock, etc.) are stunningly rendered by the Polyphony ensemble (Stephen Layton directing) on **O MAGNUM MISTERIUM** (Hyperion). On the same label, Gerald Finzi's **DIES NATALIS** shares a new disk with his better known "Intimations of Immortality"; the former score, completed in 1939, matches the introverted, questing spirit of the seventeenth-century metaphysical poem by Thomas Traherne to which it is set, and the performance by tenor John Mark Ainsley and the Corydon Singers weds the ecstatic to the sublime.

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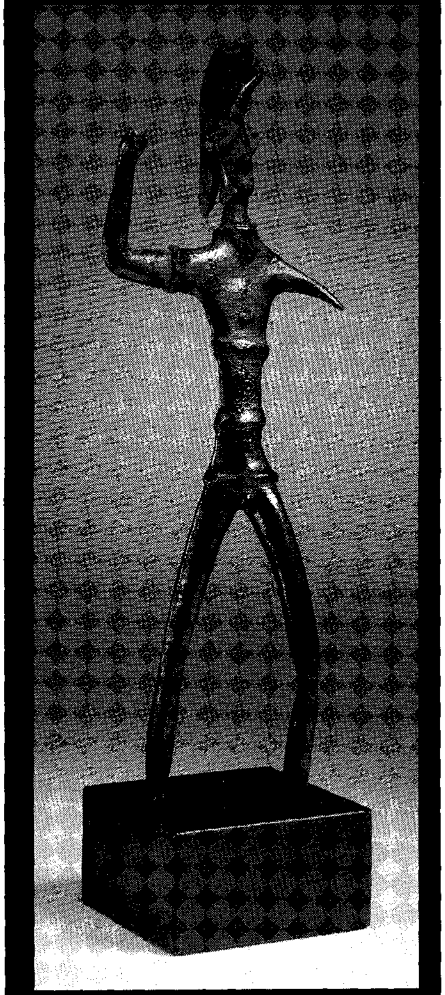

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and Mozart's D-Major Divertimento (K. 320b). (Cantor Auditorium, Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway. Dec. 1 at 2. For information about tickets, call 212-840-7470.)

JOHN BROWNING—The pianist performs sonatas by Mozart, Chopin (his Second), and Barber, as well as works by Liszt and Richard Cumming. (Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, 869 Lexington Ave., at 66th St. 744-2080. Dec. 1 at 3.)

BRENTANO STRING QUARTET—The foursome performs Schubert's G-Minor String Quartet (D. 173), Schumann's Piano Quintet (with Lee Luvisi assisting), and Chou Wen-Chung's "Clouds"; presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 1 at 5.)

PAVLINA DOKOVSKA—In her New York début recital, the Bulgarian pianist performs Schumann's "Kinderszenen" and "Faschingsschwank aus Wien," as well as several works by Debussy. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Dec. 1 at 5.)

SALON SOIRÉES—Flutist Adi Menczel and pianist Ilan Rechtman perform works by Dvořák, Mozart, Gluck, and others. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Dec. 1 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

DAVID DANIELS—Everyone seems surprised when countertenors sing anything other than early music or Britten. It's not a rational response: no other vocal tessitura comes with similar baggage, and there's a long, distinguished tradition of countertenors' and male altos' interpreting mainstream repertoire. (Russell Oberlin's recording of "Dichterliebe," made in the nineteen-fifties, jumps immediately to mind.) In this recital, Mr. Daniels offers not only selections by Purcell and Handel but also works by Bellini, Rossini, Gounod, and New York's own Richard Hundley. Pianist Martin Katz assists. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. Dec. 2 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

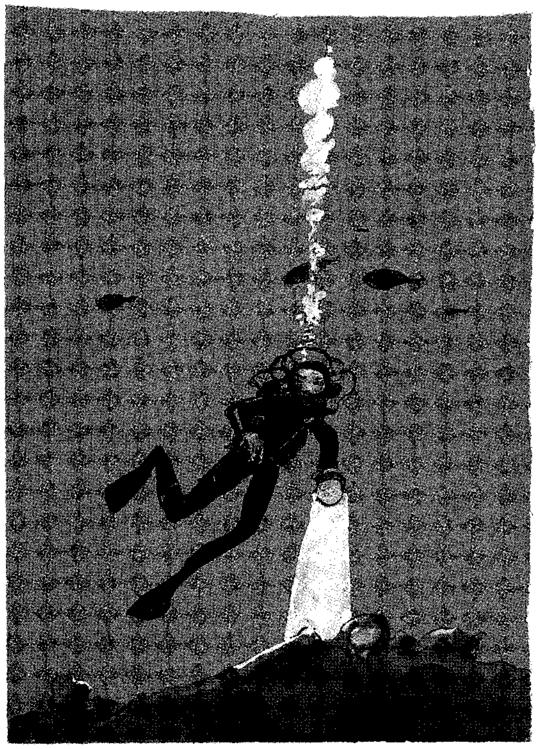
PAULINE KIM—Violinist, performing music by Schubert and Dvořák, with pianist Ilan Rechtman. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. Dec. 2 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

DIMITRIS MARINOS—Though the mandolin may conjure up images of singing gondoliers, the instrument has enjoyed considerable favor in the classical-music world: its eighteenth-century solo repertoire is extensive, and it has proved indispensable to such major-league composers as Mozart (in "Don Giovanni"), Verdi (in "Otello" and "Falstaff"), Mahler (in his Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, as well as in "Das Lied von der Erde"), and Stravinsky (in "Agon"). In this concert, Mr. Marinos explores twentieth-century additions to the instrument's solo and chamber repertoire by nine composers, including Goffredo Petrassi and Theodore Antoniou. Soprano Julia Bentley, guitarist David Starobin, harpist Stacy Shames, and marimbist James Boznos assist. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Dec. 2 at 8.)

JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET—The foursome offers Bartók's String Quartets No. 1, No. 3, and No. 5. (Alice Tully Hall. Dec. 3 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

HISTORY IN THE SINKING—Historians have been known to fudge a little, but few quite so boldly as Antonio de Morga, the beleaguered seventeenth-century Spanish admiral and author of "Successes of the Philippine Islands," who, in his account of a six-hour naval battle between the outmanned Dutch ship Mauritius and his own San Diego, placed himself in the thick of the battle. Over the past five years, the wreckage of the San Diego has been recovered, and new evidence supports the claims of his Dutch adversary: that the Spanish ship, top-heavy with cannons and treasure, sank under its own weight, while de Morga remained locked in his quarters, unable to utter a word—even after the Dutch surrendered, without a fight, long before the San Diego went down. The recovered treasure—Ming vases, Japanese swords, Mexican silver, Venetian glass—is now on display at the Philippine Center, and the riches appear unscathed and resplendent—pretty much the way they must have looked on December 14, 1600, just before de Morga dived into the Bay of Manila and swam away from his command. (556 Fifth Ave., at 46th St. 922-3019. Through Feb. 28.)



Sunken treasure, at the Philippine Center.

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

INFLATIONARY MEASURES—Rocky and Bullwinkle, Barney (the purple dinosaur, not the haberdasher), the full-figured Betty Boop (thirty-four feet, twenty-four feet, thirty-six feet), and other helium-enhanced public figures and their costumed handlers parade down 77th Street, along Central Park West, through Columbus Circle, and down Broadway to Herald Square, from 9 to noon on Nov. 28, in the seventieth annual Macy's-sponsored tromp. Those who are bored by processions on whose outcome they have no money riding should note that post times run early on Thanksgiving Day, with the first call to the post at Aqueduct Racetrack at 11 A.M.

READING—Dec. 2 at 8: Poets Anthony Hecht and Donald Justice read from their work. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

TALKS—Dec. 3 at 7: In a slide presentation, collector Mark Tomasko illustrates the intricate engravings and intaglios of nineteenth-century banknotes and securities. (Center for Book Arts, 626 Broadway, at Bleecker St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Dec. 3 at 7:15: *Cinéaste* Annette Insdorf talks with composer Marvin Hamlisch about the ways that music can tell a film's story. (92nd Street Y.)

WALK—Nov. 30 at 9:30 A.M.: The Shorewalkers set out from South Ferry for the Little Red Lighthouse, beneath the George Washington Bridge, on their annual post-turkey trek. For more information, call 330-7686.

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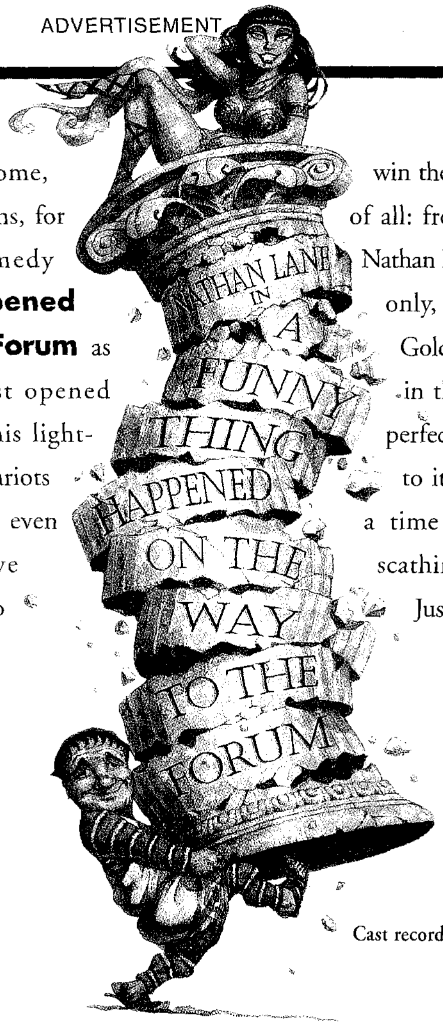

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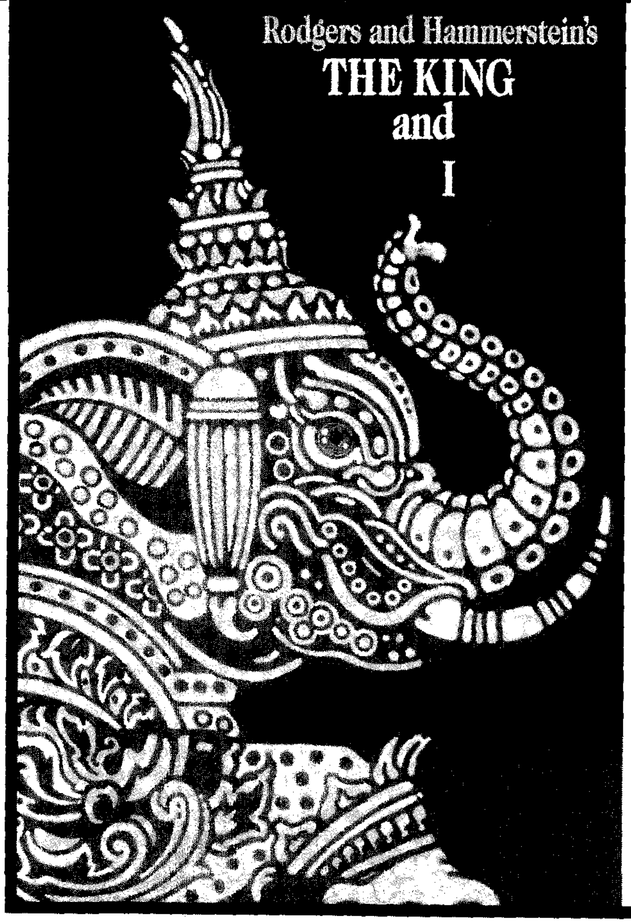

Having won every award for Best Musical Revival this season, it's no puzzlement that Rodgers and Hammerstein's **The King And I** is a triumph all over again. The sets and costumes are riveting, an opulent return to a time when theatre was lavish, grand, and magically transporting. The two stars—two-time Tony® Award-winner Donna Murphy as Anna and Lou Diamond Phillips as the stubborn King of Siam—display remarkable chemistry. The songs are every bit as fresh, engaging, and powerful as when they were first sung onstage forty-five years ago. The supporting players—the show has a cast of fifty-four—match the power of the lead stars, and the adorable children nearly steal the show.

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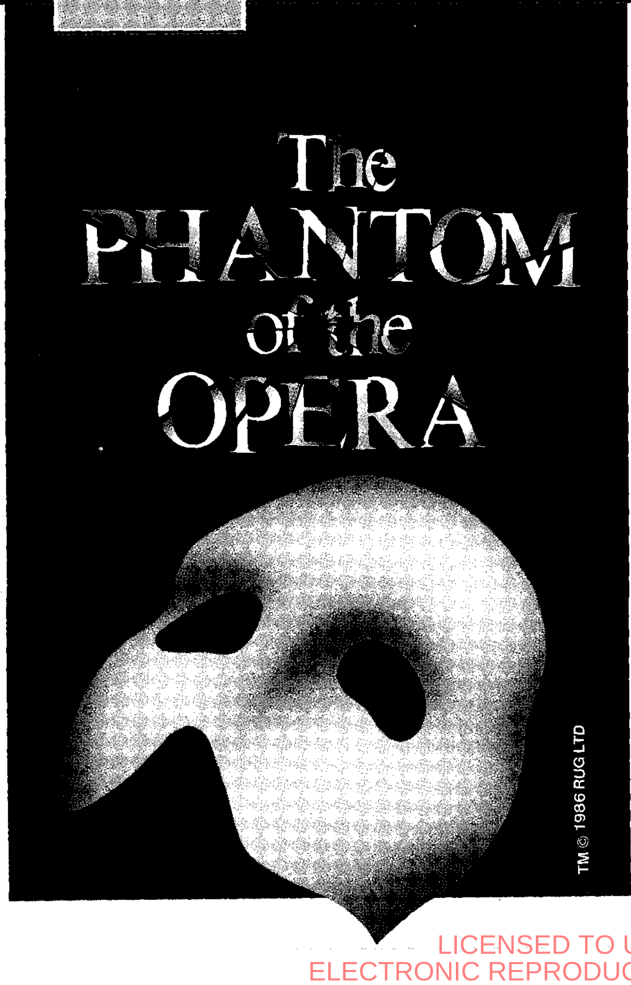
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RENT

It has been a decade since a musical won the Pulitzer Prize. Not since *A Chorus Line,* two decades ago, has a show won both the Pulitzer *and* the Tony Award for the best musical. And it has been longer still since a musical's bittersweet success so won the public's heart that it brings veteran Broadway audiences and first-time theatergoers together...and to their feet. With its eclectic, timely score and vibrant cast of contemporary characters (inspired in equal parts by New York City's East Village and Puccini's *La Bohème*), **Rent** is an exuberant celebration of love, and of the small triumphs that can balance larger tragedies. That message was made all the more resonant by the sudden death of author/composer Jonathan Larson shortly before the show opened—proof that every life should be measured in love.

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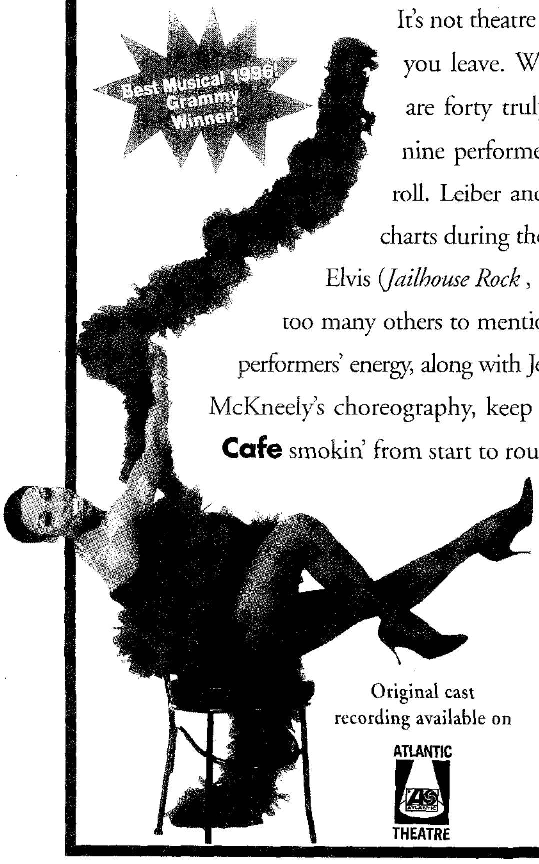

It's not theatre in the usual sense. There's no story, no plot, no message to ponder after you leave. What you get instead in Grammy-winning **Smokey Joe's Cafe** are forty truly memorable songs by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, belted out by nine performers who know how to rock, and an onstage band that knows how to roll. Leiber and Stoller, in case the names don't quite ring a bell, all but owned the charts during the fifties and early sixties—or at least their songs did. They wrote hits for Elvis (*Jailhouse Rock* , *Hound Dog*) as well as for the Drifters, the Coasters, and too many others to mention. The songs' intrinsic humor and the performers' energy, along with Jerry Zaks' direction and Joey McKneely's choreography, keep **Smokey Joe's Cafe** smokin' from start to rousing finish.

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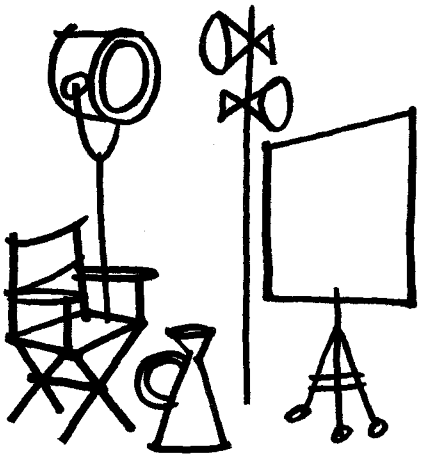
THE MOVIES



FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

The Crucible—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 27. (Lincoln Square.)

101 Dalmatians—Glenn Close is the puppy-coveting Cruella DeVil in Stephen Herek's live-action remake of Disney's 1961 animated film. With Jeff Daniels, Joely Richardson, and Joan Plowright. Screenplay by John Hughes. Opening Nov. 27. (86th Street East Twin, Gotham Cinema, Guild, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

Ridicule—Versailles, 1783: the court of Louis XVI, where wit and ridicule are the obsessions. With Charles Berling, Jean Rochefort, Fanny Ardant, and Judith Godreche. Directed by Patrice Leconte; written by Remi Waterhouse. In French. Opening Nov. 27. (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Zero Kelvin—Director Hans Petter Moland's thriller centers on three men who spend the winter of 1925 in East Greenland trapping animals for fur. With Stellan Skarsgård, Gard B. Eidsvold, and Bjørn Sundquist. In Norwegian. Opening Nov. 27. (Film Forum.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 41.)

Beautiful Thing—An urban fairy tale, set in London, about first love between two sixteen-year-old boys (Glen Berry and Scott Neal). The movie is a mixed bag, but it has sweet performances and some wonderful moments; the director, Hettie Macdonald, films through rose-colored glasses that capture the humor and charm of the story but not the drama.—B.D. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Big Night—The actor Stanley Tucci co-wrote (with Joseph Tropiano), co-directed (with Campbell Scott), and co-stars (with Tony Shalhoub) in this elegant, leisurely low-budget comedy about a struggling Italian restaurant run by a pair of immigrant brothers. The unusually happy, relaxed ensemble includes Ian Holm, Isabella Rossellini, Minnie Driver, Allison Janney, and Campbell Scott. The big set piece—a lavish dinner in honor of the singer-bandleader Louis Prima—is a fitting climax to the movie's patient accumulation of savory and blissfully pointless delights: a convincing illustration of how keen pleasure for pleasure's sake can be.—T.R. (9/23/96) (Cinema 3, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

Bitter Sugar—A passively loyal young Cuban Communist (René Lavan) falls in love with a disaffected dancer (Mayté Vilán), and his faith in the Revolution topples like a bowling pin. The director, Leon Ichaso, tries hard to be contemporary (the lovers worry less about ideology than about getting kicked out of tourist-only hotels), but at this late date criticizing Castro's Cuba feels like shooting fish in a barrel. The pair does have chemistry, though, and, with his bedroom eyes and sweet, macho naïveté, Lavan (once a regular on "One Life to Live") is a discovery. In Spanish.—S.K. (Carnegie Hall Cinemas and Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

Breaking the Waves—The Danish director Lars von Trier tells the sad story of a devout Scottish girl (Emily Watson) who becomes a whore in order to save the life of her critically ill husband (Stellan Skarsgård). She is, unmistakably, a female Christ figure, and, as von Trier follows her up the steep road to her carnal Calvary, he seems to be rediscovering some forgotten magic formula for art-house success: he gives the highbrow audience precisely what it wanted in the boom years of the fifties and early sixties—nudity plus theology. The erotic-metaphysical hokum would be somewhat easier to take if the picture displayed anything resembling a genuine religious impulse. But von Trier is no Bergman or Dreyer: he's just a peddler of cheap miracles, a wily postmodernist mountebank. Also with Katrin Cartlidge and Adrian Rawlins.—T.R. (11/18/96) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

The English Patient—Written and directed by Anthony Minghella, from the novel by Michael Ondaatje, this long and searching movie tangles together a number of stories. First, there is an adulterous love affair between Almásy (Ralph Fiennes) and Katherine (Kristin Scott Thomas) which unfolds in the sands of North Africa before the outbreak of the Second World War. Then, as the war winds down, the badly burned Almásy is cared for in an abandoned Italian monastery by a French-Canadian nurse (Juliette Binoche), who has an affair with a Sikh soldier (Naveen Andrews). Among the other characters are the decent chaps who tried to befriend the frosty Almásy in the desert and the mysterious Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe), a scavenging thief who appears to know the secrets of Almásy's past. All these plot lines interweave and tauten right up to the unbearable romantic tension of the climax. The triumph of the film lies not just in the force and range of the performances—the crisp sweetness of Scott Thomas, say, versus the raw volatility of Binoche—but in Minghella's creation of an intimate epic: vast landscapes mingle with the minute details of desire, and the combination is transfixing.—A.L. (11/25/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Village East Cinemas.)

Far Harbor—Eight friends in their mid-twenties confront their ambitions and one another during a weekend at the beach, in a drama written and directed by John Huddles. With Edward Atterton, Jennifer Connelly, Dan Futterman, Marcia Gay Harden, George Newbern, Jim True, Tracee Ellis Ross, and Andrew Lauren. (Quad Cinema.)

The First Wives Club—Goldie Hawn, Bette Midler, and Diane Keaton, three of America's finest comic actresses, get together for the first time, and the best that Hollywood has to offer them is this loud empowerment comedy. The premise—old friends meet at a funeral and find that they have something in common: their husbands are leaving them for younger women—sounds like a fair taking-off point for some wicked comedy. But all that the scenarist, Robert Harling, can think of to follow it up with is a tepid revenge fantasy in which they bond and dole out justice to their cheating men. The director, Hugh Wilson, aims for harmless froth, and what he winds up with, as the hysteria level rises, is something brash and strident.—B.D. (Art Greenwich Twin, Embassy 4, and 72nd Street East.)

High School High—A daft new comedy from David Zucker; the target this time is not disaster flicks or cop sagas but soppy educational dramas. Jon Lovitz plays a shy, well-meaning history teacher who takes a post at Marion Barry High, the sort of establishment where the principal whacks pupils with a baseball bat. The main reason to stay with the movie is Lovitz; still, considering that it wrings all its laughs out of an insoluble crisis in education, it's pretty funny. With Mekhi Phifer, Louise Fletcher, and, of course, Tia Carrere, who seems to have taken over where the late Dorothy

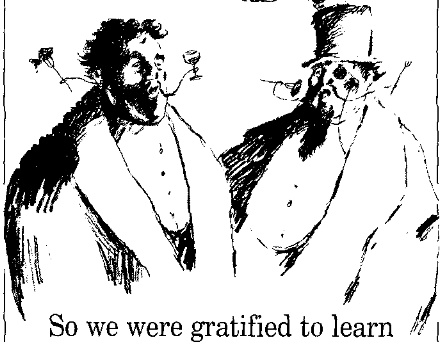
WE READ BUBBLE-EYED

in the London Standard the account of two Frenchmen who sat down to a gargantuan feast in La Rochelle's Rabelais Restaurant.

The fourteen hour, £1,500 meal opened with canapes of Sevruga caviar, foie gras, marinated salmon: progressed into emerald oysters: followed up with raw foie gras marinated in Montrachet: and pursued with a litany of crayfish, truffles, filet de boeuf en croute, salad, cherre, patisserie, sorbets …

As for refreshment, the tally at the end of the repast was two bottles of 1969 champagne, ten bottles of Montrachet 1982, a Chateau Margaux 1966, and an 1895 Armagnac.

Of course with such a 'Grand Bouffe' behind them, our gourmands could scarcely have hoped to appreciate the sherry-gold finesse of a 25 year-old The Macallan Malt Whisky at the end of the meal.



So we were gratified to learn that, very wisely, they decided to start with it.

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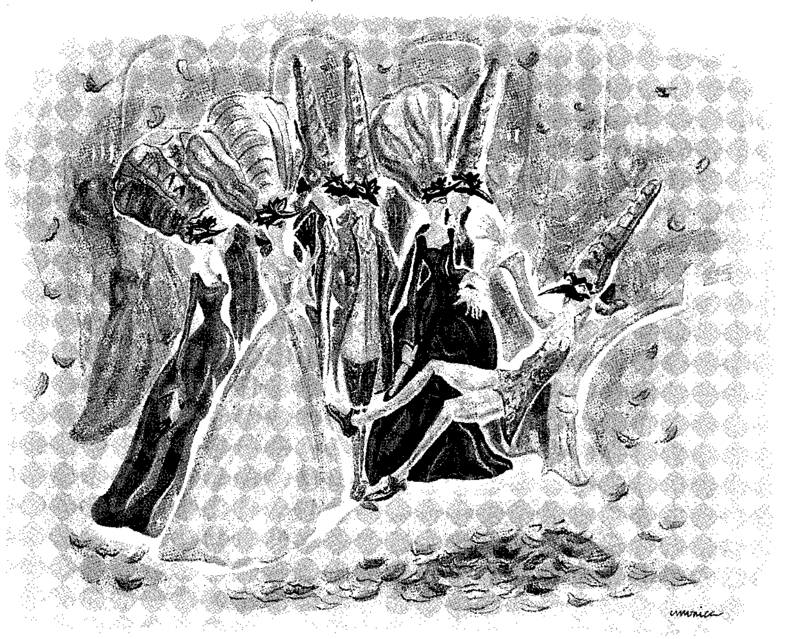
Lamour left off. Hart Bochner directed.—A.L. (11/11/96) (Embassy 3.)

Hype!—A documentary directed by Doug Pray, chronicling Seattle's early-nineties pop-music scene. (State.)

Jingle All the Way—Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sinbad share the screen with Rita Wilson, Phil Hartman, and James Belushi in Brian Levant's comedy about Christmas shopping. Written by Randy Kornfield. (Baronet, Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Olympia, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th St. East, and Waverly.)

Looking for Richard—Al Pacino, a self-confessed Shakespeare addict, has come up with a witty, two-tone movie about his obsession. Much of it is documentary—a number of loose, light riffs on the subject of "Richard III," with Pacino recruiting fellow-actors, famous directors, academics, and passing New Yorkers to discuss the play's mettle and morals. Every so often, without much ado, the comedy of discussion stops for excerpts from the tragedy itself, played dark and straight, with performances of surprising intensity from such stars as Alec Baldwin and Winona Ryder; Pacino is the haunted and unshaven king. The film, which is at once diverting and deeply concentrated, ends up, of course, telling us as much about Pacino as about Shakespeare.—A.L. (Reviewed 11/25/96 under Onward and Upward with the Arts.) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)



Opening November 27, Patrice Leconte's "Ridicule."

Michael Collins—The short life and lasting legend of the Irish freedom fighter Michael Collins (1890-1922), compressed into a vigorous movie by the writer and director Neil Jordan. Liam Neeson gives a hefty performance as the hero, but the film takes too much care insuring that we like and admire him, cooling the figure's hot temper and ignoring any sins of the flesh (let alone of the spirit) which he committed—he remains devoted to Kitty Kiernan (Julia Roberts). The strength of the movie resides mainly in the work of its cameraman, Chris Menges, who delivers a barrage of images as rousing and changeable as the fortunes of Collins himself. With Aidan Quinn, Stephen Rea, Alan Rickman, and Charles Dance.—A.L. (10/14/96) (Beekman.)

Microcosmos—A revelatory documentary about insects. The directors, Claude Nuridsany and Marie Pérennou, who were trained as biologists, spent years designing cameras that would capture spiders, butterflies, beetles, and bees in their habitats as never before. There are no voice-overs, just closeups of bugs; a few sequences surpass the most horrific science fiction, but a surprising number of the creatures are quite cute. The inventive, funny-ethereal score is by Bruno Coulais.—S.K. (Film Forum 3.)

The Mirror Has Two Faces—In this bizarre romantic comedy, Barbra Streisand plays a plain-Jane Columbia professor who falls in love with handsome Jeff Bridges, a colleague who believes sex would spoil their relationship. The movie, written by Richard LaGravenese (who did the surprisingly understated adaptation of "The Bridges of Madison County"), is ostensibly about the nature of beauty and its power over those in love; but in Streisand's hands (she produced and directed) it becomes an uncomfortable ugly-duckling story about a woman who has an epiphany, develops self-confidence, gets in shape, dyes her hair, and becomes a glamorous nineties siren. Streisand's co-stars Lauren Bacall (in a snapping-turtle performance as her frosty mom) and Mimi Rogers (as her prettier, uptight sister) and the affable Bridges all generate real charm. So does Streisand, in her initial scenes: she has the softer look of her earlier films, and her comic timing is intact. Later, after her diva makeover, the vain, arrogant edge of her later films returns, and she acquires the look of a powerful Hollywood player. And, while the movie's slide into a my-mother-never-told-me-I'm-beautiful gripe session is fascinating to watch, it's also embarrassingly trite.—B.D. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

Mother Night—Keith Gordon's adaptation of an early (1961) Kurt Vonnegut novel is always engrossing but never especially persuasive. The hero (Nick Nolte) is an American writer, living in Germany in the thirties, who is recruited to spy for American intelligence. His wartime reports are encoded in weekly propaganda broadcasts, in which he smoothly explicates the anti-Semitic policies of the Third Reich; after the war, he broods over the possibility that his broadcasts may have done more harm than good. Although Nolte gives an intelligent performance, he's too straightforward an actor to convey the slipperiness of such a man-without-qualities figure. Also with Alan Arkin, Sheryl Lee, and John Goodman.—T.R. (11/4/96) (68th St. Playhouse.)

Paris Was a Woman—The documentary director Greta Schiller's examination of Paris modernism in the twenties and thirties is a confection of American expatriates, French and American lesbians, and avant-garde art and thought. Making impeccable use of old photographs, film footage, and recordings, Schiller gives this world of literary salons and unconventional bookshops a surprising amount of verve. Giants like Picasso, Joyce, Janet Flanner, Djuna Barnes, and Gertrude Stein (who, looking like a cook on a pirate ship, dominates the proceedings) come across as positively fun-loving, and Paris blooms like a rose.—B.D. (Quad Cinema.)

Ransom—Ron Howard's grinding picture could have been a snappy little hostage thriller but decided, somewhere along the way, to take itself terribly seriously. Mel Gibson plays the wealthy owner of an airline, whose young son (Brawley Nolte) is kidnapped by a gang of good-for-nothings. Rene Russo suffers from a woefully underpowered role as Tom's wife, Gary Sinise struggles to convince us that he has the makings of a scuzzy villain, and Gibson himself has to stand there and act tragic in closeup.—A.L. (11/11/96) (84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 1, Embassy 2, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas.)

Secrets & Lies—Hortense (Marianne Jean-Baptiste), the heroine of Mike Leigh's broadest and most ambitious film to date, decides after the death of her adoptive mother to seek her biological one. The quest turns up Cynthia (Brenda Blethyn), who freaks out: Hortense is middle-class and black, Cynthia working-class and white. Jean-Baptiste gives a quiet, pacific performance; Blethyn deals in spasms of exaggeration which belong in another film altogether. Still, there is a fine supporting cast, and they all gather in the final scene, a cathartic barbecue that starts off as nicely choreographed light comedy and darkens to a Bergman-like chorus of wailing women and slightly overcooked dialogue.—A.L. (Eastside Playhouse and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Set It Off—Jada Pinkett, playing a protective big sister trying to pay for her brother's college education, and Queen Latifah, as a brave, blustering pothead lesbian, lead a foursome of young black women driven by poverty, police brutality, and the general callousness of men and of white people into robbing banks. Vivica A. Fox and Kimberly Elise round out the quartet, and the actresses are all strong in quirky, individual ways. When the characters get in over their heads, the dominant mood isn't the usual thriller exhilaration—it's sadness. This is a dumb heist movie that nevertheless gets real mileage from the plight of its tough but naïve protagonists, who (pathetically) represent virgin territory for Hollywood. (One factual beef: the banks are implausibly stocked with dozens of live tellers guarding huge piles of cash, as if this were 1952.) With Blair Underwood, who plays a strange fantasy lover for Pinkett—a dapper buppie gourmet who teaches her about ambition. Written by Takashi Bufford and Kate Lanier; directed by F. Gary Gray.—S.K. (Criterion Center, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

Shine—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Cinema I and Lincoln Square.)

A Single Girl—Benoît Jacquot's delicate exercise in neo-Nouvelle Vague follows Valérie (the incredibly poised Virginie Ledoyen), a tough young Parisienne, in real time as she tells her boyfriend (Benoît Magimel) that she's pregnant, bickers with him, and then reports for her first day of work delivering room service at a fancy hotel. The cinéma-vérité approach actually seems a bit old-fashioned, a leftover from the days when film technique could revolutionize the way we looked at daily life. Ledoyen, though, makes the girlishly pretty but strong and angry character of Valérie feel like something new. Jacquot toys with simplistic explanations for her hurt—her father deserted her mother, the men at the hotel all want to sleep with her and the women are jealous; what depth the movie has comes entirely from Ledoyen's unexplained silences and her enigmatic eyes. Written by Jacquot and Jérôme Beaujour. In French.—S.K. (Quad Cinema.)

Sleepers—Barry Levinson's movie is a doggedly faithful adaptation of Lorenzo Carcaterra's 1995 best-seller, which purported to be a memoir of the author's youth in Hell's Kitchen, his horri-

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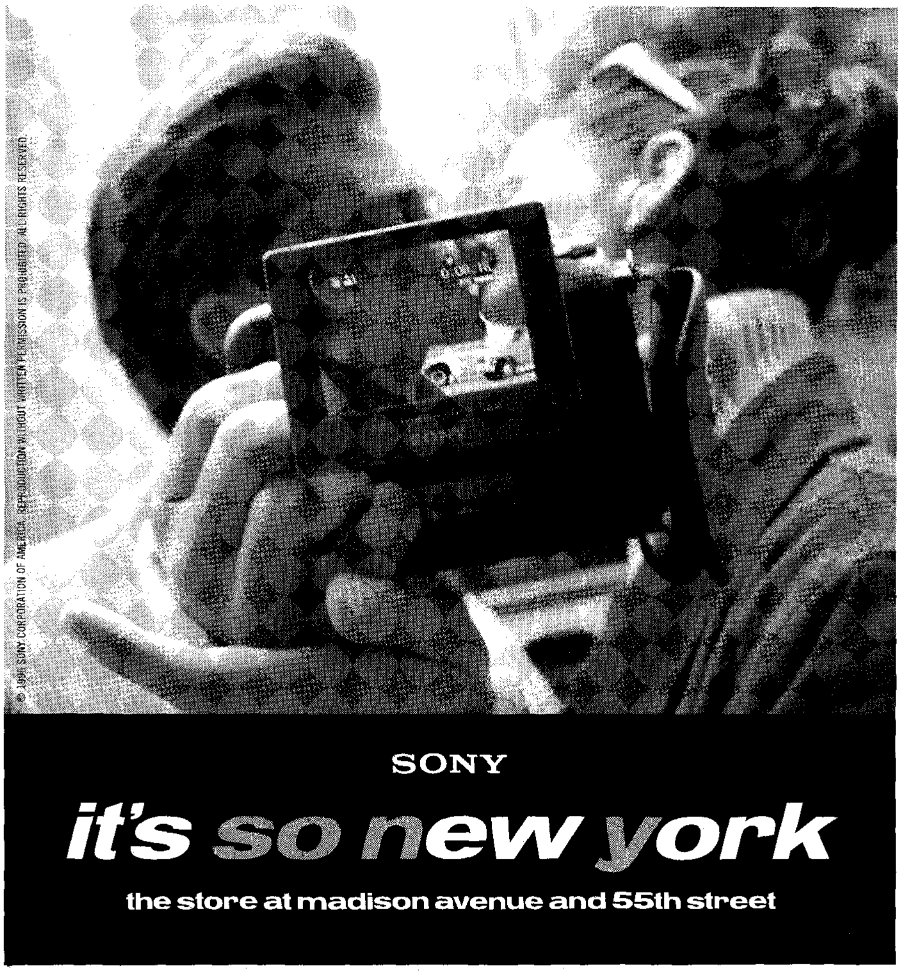

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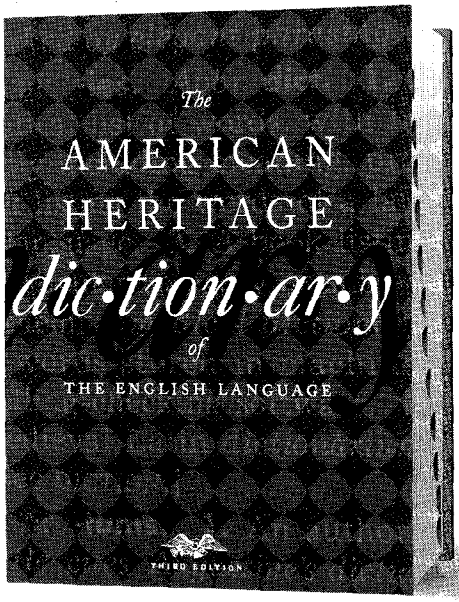

fying experiences in an upstate reformatory, and his participation, years later, in an elaborate scheme to avenge the abuses that he and his friends suffered at the hands of the reform school's sadistic guards. The book quickly aroused suspicion that it was a hoax, and the film does nothing to dispel the aura of fishiness: it plays as a thoroughly old-fashioned Hollywood crime melodrama. With Jason Patric, Brad Pitt, Robert De Niro, Kevin Bacon, Minnie Driver, Vittorio Gassman, Frank Medrano, and Dustin Hoffman.—T.R. (11/4/96) (Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

SPACE JAM—Fans of Chuck Jones, who animated the classic Warner Bros. cartoons of the forties and fifties, should steer clear of this Looney Tunes reunion. Produced by Ivan Reitman and more assembled than directed by Joe Pytka (who has made some eye-catching television commercials), this big-budget attempt at a merchandising bonanza doesn't begin to approach the artistry of "Who Framed Roger Rabbit": the cartoon characters never seem fully integrated into the live action—they just hang there. The story, in which Michael Jordan, the basketball superstar, saves Bugs Bunny and friends from aliens who want them for their Disney-like amusement park, sacrifices Jones's anarchic spirit to the Warners marketing team in ways so obvious that they make Disney look humble.—B.D. (Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT—The crew of the Starship Enterprise (it includes Patrick Stewart, LeVar Burton, and Jonathan Frakes, who also directed) heads back to Earth to save the planet. Screenplay by Brannon Braga and Ronald D. Moore. (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

SURVIVING PICASSO—A refreshingly dry, offbeat treatment, written by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and directed by James Ivory, of the mid-century love affair between Pablo Picasso (Anthony Hopkins) and Françoise Gilot (Natascha McElhone). McElhone's amazingly wooden performance actually works for Gilot: she's too cold and introverted to be a victim for long. Hopkins doesn't exactly play it for sympathy, either, but at least his hypocritical, sublimely manipulative Picasso evens the match.—S.K. (Paris.)

SWINGERS—A funny, boys-on-the-town ode to friendship and cruising for girls. The writer, Jon Favreau, co-stars with Vince Vaughn, a handsome new actor, and they're hilarious—but the film isn't a bubbleheaded comedy. The director, Doug Liman, follows his characters through swinging-singles hangouts from Hollywood to Vegas with a neon-soaked camera; beneath all the hip talk and the funny predicaments, his two heroes are wistful, stargazing romantics.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center.)

THE WAR AT HOME—A drama directed by and starring Emilio Estevez, as a troubled Vietnam veteran in the early nineteen-seventies. With Martin Sheen and Kathy Bates. Written by James Duff, from his 1985 play, "Home Front." (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S ROMEO & JULIET—Whether the film really belongs to Shakespeare is open to question: his words are there, if you can hear them above the screech of the soundtrack, but the tone is set entirely by the Australian director Baz Luhrmann ("Strictly Ballroom"), who has updated the setting to a lurid Latino city bristling with drug wars and police helicopters. The Montague and Capulet elders (led by Brian Dennehy and Paul Sorvino) cruise round in stretch limos, while their errant offspring practice their gunplay at the beach. The energy is unstoppable, and that's the problem: Luhrmann juggles with the play so busily that he lets it slip through his fingers. Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes give it their all as the star-crossed lovers, but, like the rest of the cast, they tend to shout or hurry their lines when everything gets to be too much;

by the end, any hint of tragedy has disappeared in the kitsch.—A.L. (Reviewed 11/25/96 under Onward and Upward with the Arts.) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, National Twin, and Orpheum VII.)

ALSO PLAYING

BASQUIAT (reviewed in our issue of 8/19/96): The Screening Room. . . . **COLD COMFORT FARM** (5/13/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **D3: THE MIGHTY DUCKS:** Manhattan Twin. . . . **EMMA** (8/5/96): 64th and 2nd. . . . **FLY AWAY HOME** (9/16/96): 64th and 2nd. . . . **THE GARDEN OF THE FINZI-CONTINIS:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE GLIMMER MAN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **LOVESICK ON NANA STREET:** Angelika 57. . . . **NOT BAD FOR A GIRL:** Cinema Village. . . . **THE PROPRIETOR:** Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **THAT THING YOU DO!** (10/7/96): Manhattan Twin and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **A TIME TO KILL** (7/29/96): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **TRAINSPOTTING** (7/22/96): The Screening Room. . . . **TWELFTH NIGHT:** Regency. . . . **WALKING AND TALKING:** 59th Street East Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

ANGELIKA 57, 225 W. 57th St.
ANGELIKA FILM CENTER, 18 W. Houston St.
ART GREENWICH TWIN, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at Broadway.
BARONET, Third Ave. at 59th St.
BEEKMAN, Second Ave. at 66th St.
CARNEGIE HALL CINEMAS, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd St.
CINEMA I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA 3, 2 W. 59th St.
CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th St.
CORONET, Third Ave. at 59th St.
CRITERION CENTER, Broadway at 44th St.
EAST 85TH STREET, First Ave. at 85th St.
EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84TH STREET SIXPLEX, Broadway at 84th St.
86TH STREET EAST TWIN, Third Ave. at 86th St.
EMBASSY I, Broadway at 46th St.
EMBASSY 2, 3, AND 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th St.
FILM FORUM, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd St.
GOTHAM CINEMA, Third Ave. at 58th St.
GUILD, 33 W. 50th St.
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
LINCOLN SQUARE, Broadway at 68th St.
MANHATTAN TWIN, Third Ave. at 59th St.
METRO CINEMA I AND 2, Broadway at 99th St.
MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th St.
NATIONAL TWIN, Broadway at 44th St.
NEW YORK TWIN, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19TH STREET EAST 6, Broadway at 19th St.
OLYMPIA I AND II, Broadway at 107th St.
ORPHEUM VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
PARIS, 4 W. 58th St.
PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th St.
QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th St.
REGENCY, Broadway at 67th St.
THE SCREENING ROOM, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd St.
64TH AND 2ND, Second Ave. at 64th St.
68TH ST. PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72ND STREET EAST, Third Ave. at 71st St.
STATE, Broadway at 45th St.
SUTTON I AND 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
23RD ST. WEST TRIPLEX, 333 W. 23rd St.
34TH ST. EAST, 241 E. 34th St.
34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th St.
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, Second Ave. at 12th St.
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
WAVERLY I AND 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
WORLDWIDE CINEMAS, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
ZIEGFELD, 141 W. 54th St.

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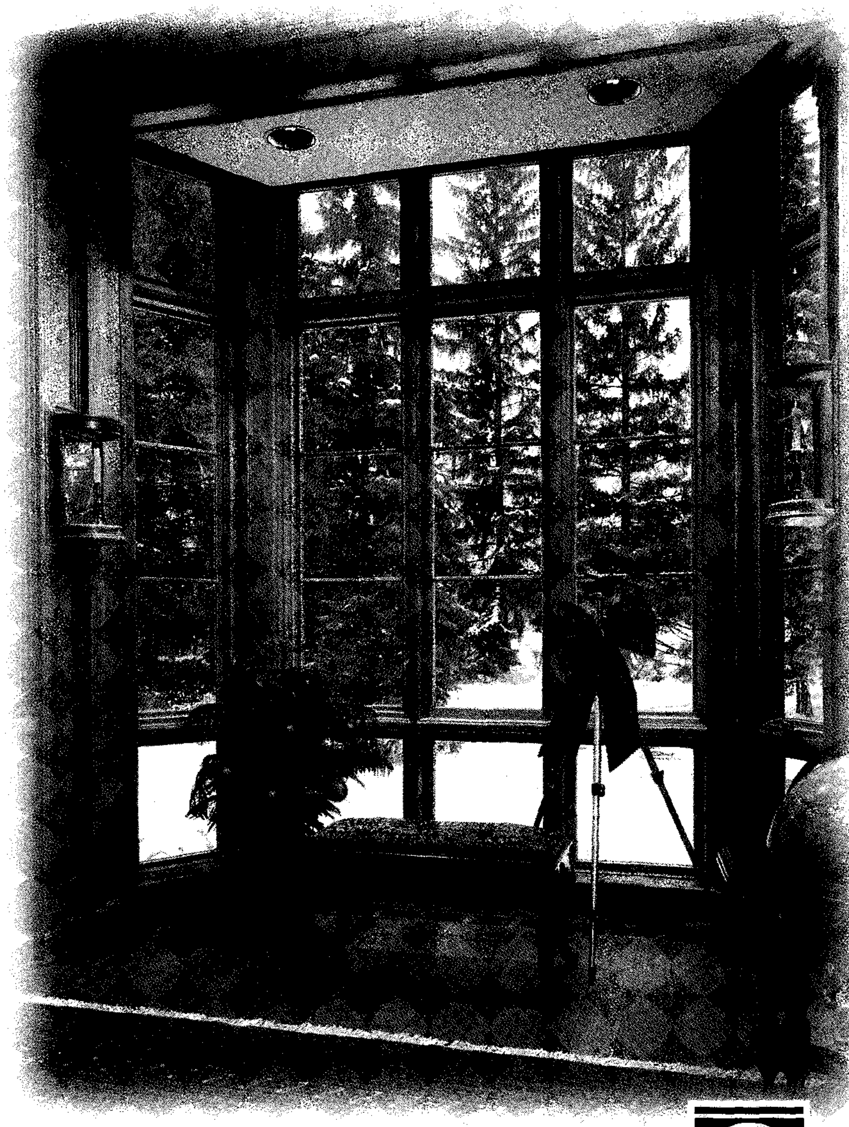

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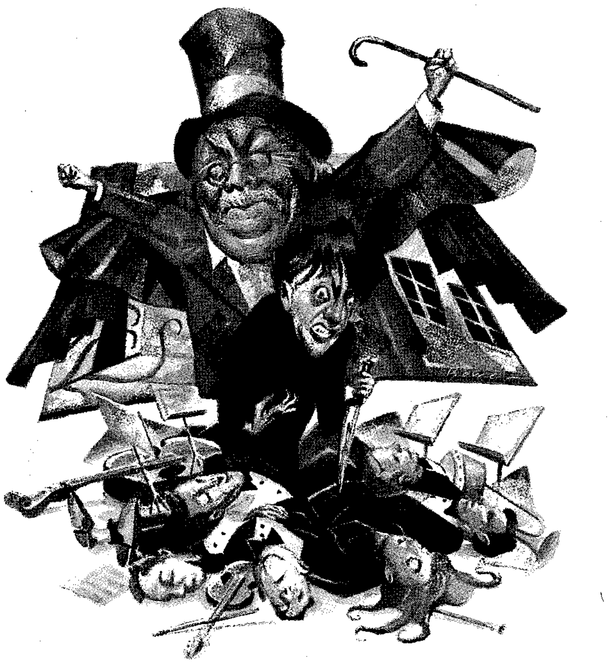
REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

BOOMERANG! (1947)—Elia Kazan was still a fledgling movie director when he did this modest, cleanly made, rather simplistic crime picture. It's based on an episode in the career of Homer Cummings (who was Franklin Roosevelt's first Attorney General); as a state's attorney in Connecticut, Cummings became convinced that a man he was about to prosecute was innocent, and set about gathering evidence to clear him. The film was shot in Stamford (the actual events took place in Bridgeport). With Dana Andrews, Jane Wyatt, Lee J. Cobb, Sam Levene, Arthur Kennedy, Cara Williams, Taylor Holmes, Ed Begley, Karl Malden, Robert Keith, Anthony Ross, Bert Freed, and nonprofessionals from the area.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Nov. 27-28.)



"The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," with music performed by the Club Foot Orchestra.

TIM BOWER

THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI (1919)—The spiralling woodwinds and insinuating percussion of Richard Marriott's 1987 score for Robert Wiene's mad classic of German Expressionism, performed by the Club Foot Orchestra, bring new zest to the picture. As a spooked soul narrates the tale of the side-show mountebank Dr. Caligari (Werner Krauss) and the somnambulist Cesare (Conrad Veidt), who kills at his command, the eleven-member ensemble creates an audio vortex that leaves audiences giddily disoriented. The Club Foot musicians have a gift for obliquely illuminating a moviemaker's obsessions; and this demented picture, with its invocation of medieval legend, its prescient yet twisted paranoia, its vision of a tall, slinky figure in black spiriting away the purest damsel, and, of course, its eye-bending sets, is an ideal vehicle for their sleight of mind. Their blend of classical and carnival sounds with jazz and folk gets at the profound confusion beneath the self-consciousness of the film's craft—the music doubles back on itself the way the movie does when it casts doubt on both the powers that be and the man who dares raise his voice in protest. This is music that bubbles up from the intersection of aesthetics and the id.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; Nov. 29-30 and Dec. 1.)

PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE (1985)—This slapstick novelty starring the grown-up yet prepubescent Pee-wee Herman is somewhere between a parody of kitsch and a celebration of it, and it has the bouncing-along inventiveness of a good cartoon. When Pee-wee's bike—the love of his life—is stolen, his search to recover it takes him from L.A. to Texas, to the Alamo, and back. Hitching rides, he encounters a series of American-movie archetypes, and the twenty-six-year-old director Tim Burton shows his flair for the silly-surreal. The movie is full of slobby, hairy giants, and you see them from Pee-wee's point of view. He looks at the dirty, uncouth, threatening men and would rather remain a ten-year-old.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Nov. 30.)

PINKY (1949)—Pinky is so light-skinned she passed for white while studying nursing in Boston; when she returns to her washerwoman grandmother's Southern shack, she is terrified and enraged by a fresh awakening to what she has almost forgotten—what it's like to be treated as a Negro, not only by contemptuous whites but by self-hating Negroes. Elia Kazan directs this material with a fine eye for the vicious undercurrents of Southern decay. The film isn't overwhelmingly courageous—Pinky isn't played by a Negro actress, she's played by petite, delicate-faced Jeanne Crain—but though "Pinky" is slick and Hollywoodized, it's also pretty good.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; starting Dec. 3.)

A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN (1945)—Despite its trite coming-of-age contours (each calamity teaches a lesson), the director, Elia Kazan, packs an emotional charge into this story of a girl growing up in turn-of-the-century Brooklyn. The staging of his first movie betrays his theatrical origins, but Kazan's sure touch with the cast clarifies the tense bonds of a hardworking, practical wife (Dorothy McGuire), her alcoholic singing-waiter husband (James Dunn), and their daughter (Peggy Ann Garner) and son (Ted Donaldson). Dunn spouts pipe dreams with a lyric desperation, while Garner shows the edgy, sometimes eerie urgency of adolescent hopes and fixations; together they achieve a rough-edged perfection. And the other actors (including Joan Blondell, in the quintessential Blondell role, as McGuire's good-hearted, earthy sister) create an atmosphere of sentiment and striving that fills in for the absence of visual artistry and poetry. The movie may not venture into the unknown, but it doesn't cheat; its square intensity fortifies you like an honest breakfast. Adapted by Tess Slesinger and Frank Davis from Betty Smith's novel.—M.S. (Film Forum 2; Nov. 27-28.)

VERTIGO (1958)—The infinitely suggestive sights and sounds of Alfred Hitchcock's romantic thriller have been refurbished by the ace film-restoration team of Robert A. Harris and James C. Katz, and, although there's no new footage in the fresh 70-mm. prints they've made, the increased clarity of the oneiric, surrealist imagery and the soaring music (by Bernard Herrmann) is more than enough to release new meanings, surprising resonances. As the detective hero (James Stewart) tails a mysterious woman (Kim Novak) at a distance that becomes progressively less discreet, we gradually realize that, in the course of the film, the straight line of surveillance is constantly, imperceptibly curving, until finally it describes a perfect circle: the true shape of romantic obsession. This picture isn't a mystery story, but a story about a mystery: the mystery of why the ardent lovers, the detective and his quarry, are doomed to pursue each other endlessly. And the real, and terrifying, end of that investigation is a diagram of the cruel geometry of desire. Also with Barbara Bel Geddes and Tom Helmore. (The screenplay, by Alec Coppel and Samuel Taylor, is based on a novel by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac.)—T.R. (11/18/96) (Chelsea Cinemas.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—A program of films directed by Elia Kazan. Through Nov. 28: "Boomerang!" (†) and "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" (†). . . . Nov. 29-Dec. 1: "On the Waterfront" (1954). . . . From Dec. 3: "Gentleman's Agreement" (1947) and "Pinky" (†). . . . ¶ Dec. 2: "Humoresque" (1920, Frank Borzage; silent) and "Gretchen the Greenhorn" (1916, Chester and Sidney Franklin; silent).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Dec. 6: Films by three Korean filmmakers (Im Kwon-Taek, Shin Sang-Ok, and Yu Hyun-Mok); all in Korean, with English subtitles. . . . ¶ Nov. 29 at 3 and Nov. 30 at 2:30: "Going Home" (1973, Adolfas Mekas and Pola Chapelle). . . . ¶ Nov. 29 at 6: Two short films by Edin Vélez. . . . ¶ Nov. 29 at 7:45 and Dec. 1 at 2: "I Do Not Know What It Is I Am Like" (1986, Bill Viola). . . . ¶ Nov. 30 at 5: "I, a Man" (1968, Andy Warhol). . . . ¶ Dec. 1 at 5 and Dec. 2 at 3: "Amy" (1979, Laura Mulvey and Peter Wallen) and "Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti" (1983, Mulvey and Wallen). . . . ¶ Dec. 2 at 6:30: "Garbage" (1995), directed by Peter Byck, who will be present. . . . ¶ Dec. 3 at 3 and 6: "The Lost Garden: The Life and Cinema of Alice-Guy Blaché" (1995, Marquise Lepage).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Dec. 5: Films from Arab countries. . . . ¶ Two silent films shown with live accompaniment by the Club Foot Orchestra. Nov. 29 at 7 and 9:30 and Nov. 30-Dec. 1 at 9:30: "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" (†). . . . Nov. 30 at 11 and 7 and Dec. 1 at 7: "Sherlock Jr." (1924, Buster Keaton).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Dec. 3 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Son of the Shark" (1993, Agnès Merlet; in French).

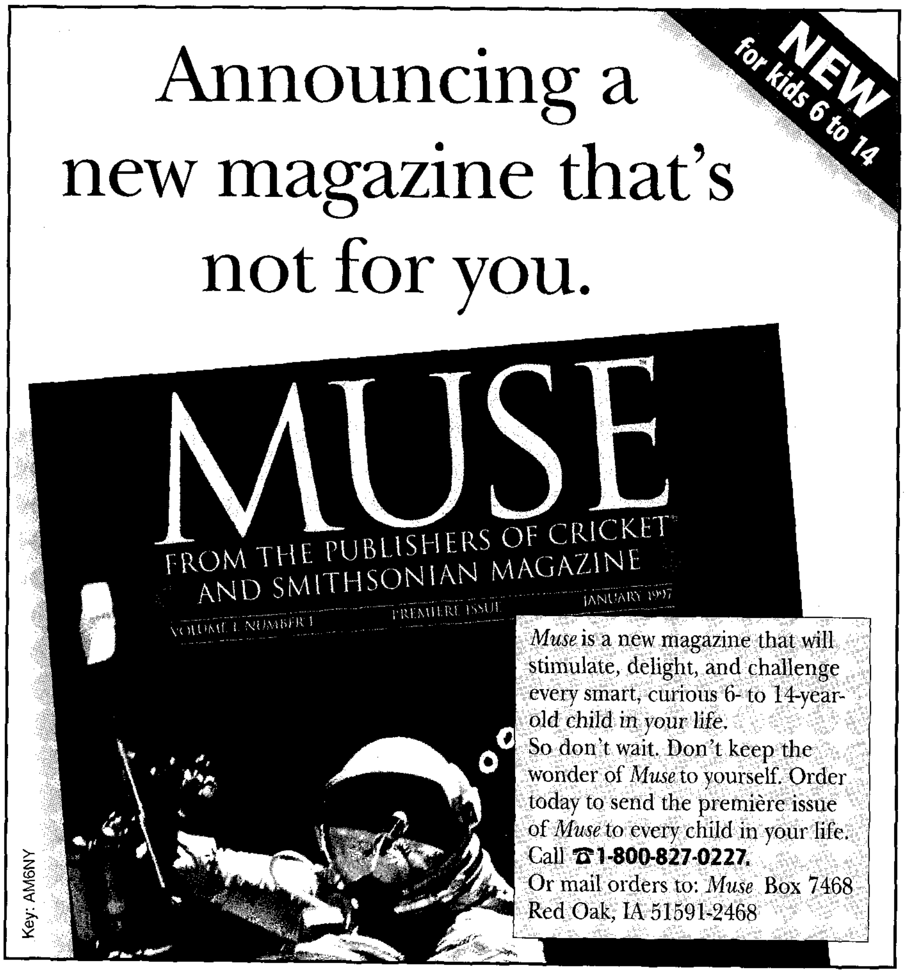
American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Films directed by Tim Burton. Nov. 29 at 2: "Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas" (1993). . . . Nov. 30 at 2: "Pee-wee's Big Adventure" (†). . . . Nov. 30 at 4:30: "Edward Scissorhands" (1990). . . . Dec. 1 at 2: "Batman" (1989). . . . Dec. 1 at 5: "Batman Returns" (1992).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—Dec. 3: A showing of Satyajit Ray's Apu trilogy. At 6, "Pather Panchali" (1955); at 8:15, "Aparajito" (1956); and at 10:45: "The World of Apu" (1959).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Dec. 1 at 7, the feature will be "The Harvey Girls" (1946, George Sidney).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—Starting Nov. 29, the 4th Annual Contemporary African Diaspora Film Festival, featuring thirty-five films from twenty-four countries. (For information about titles, schedules, and tickets, call 749-6020.)

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—A program of films by Jacques Rivette; in French, with English subtitles. Nov. 27-28 at 5:40: "Paris Nous Appartient" (1961). . . . Nov. 27-28 at 8: "Suzanne Simonin, la Religieuse de Denis Diderot" (1966). . . . Nov. 29-30 at 6:20, Dec. 1 at 2, and Dec. 2-3 at 6:20: "Jeanne la Pucelle: Part One, Les Batailles" (1993). . . . Nov. 29-30 at 9:10 and Dec. 1 at 5: "Le Bande des Quatre" (1988). . . . Nov. 30 at 2 and Dec. 1 at 8: "La Belle Noiseuse" (1990). . . . Dec. 2-3 at 9:10: "L'Amour par Terre" (1983). . . . Dec. 3 at 8: "Jean Renoir, le Patron" (1967). . . . Dec. 3 at 9:30: "Le Point du Nord" (1980). . . . ¶ Nov. 27 at 7 and 9:30: "Wings of Desire" (1987, Wim Wenders; in German). . . . ¶ Nov. 27 at 10:15: "Saturday Night Fever" (1978, John Badham). . . . ¶ Nov. 29 at 8, Nov. 30 at 6, and Dec. 1 at 8 and 10: "Those Loved by God" (1992, Johannes Holzhausen) and "The Bed Queen" (1994, Gabrielle Baur). . . . ¶ Nov. 29-30 at 10 and Dec. 1 at 6: "Gold" (1972, Bob Levis). . . . ¶ Nov. 30 at 7:30: Films and videos by Carolee Schneemann.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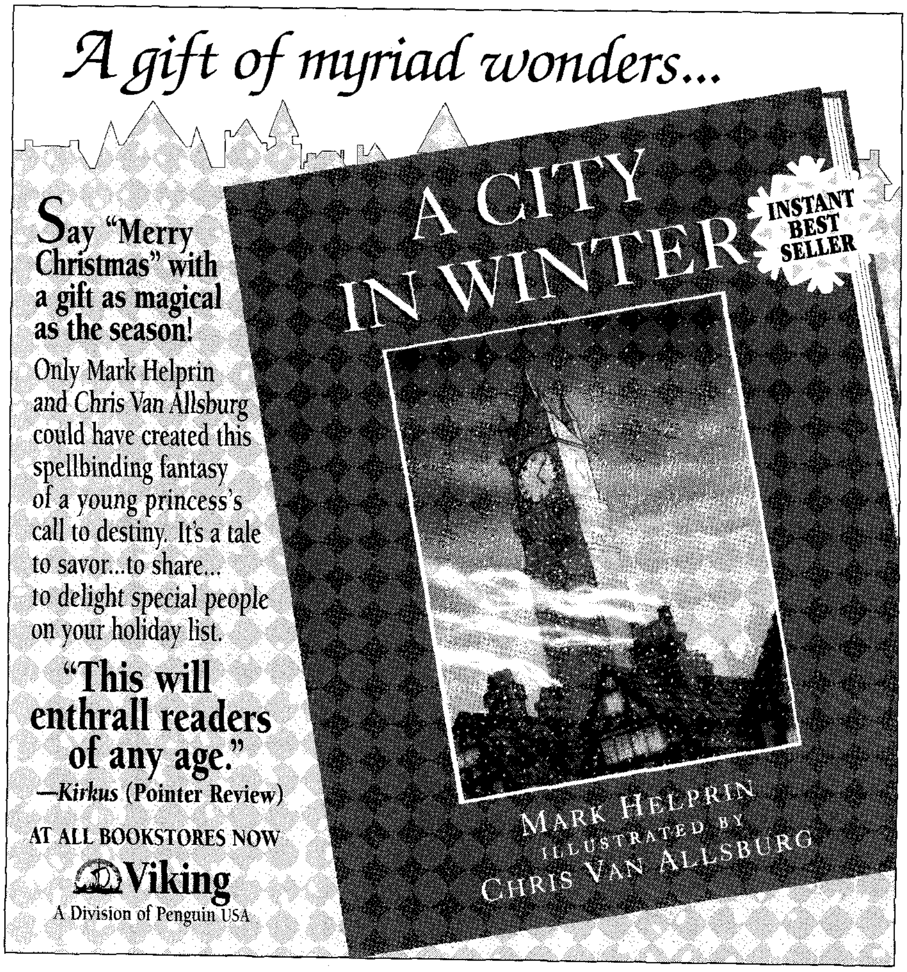
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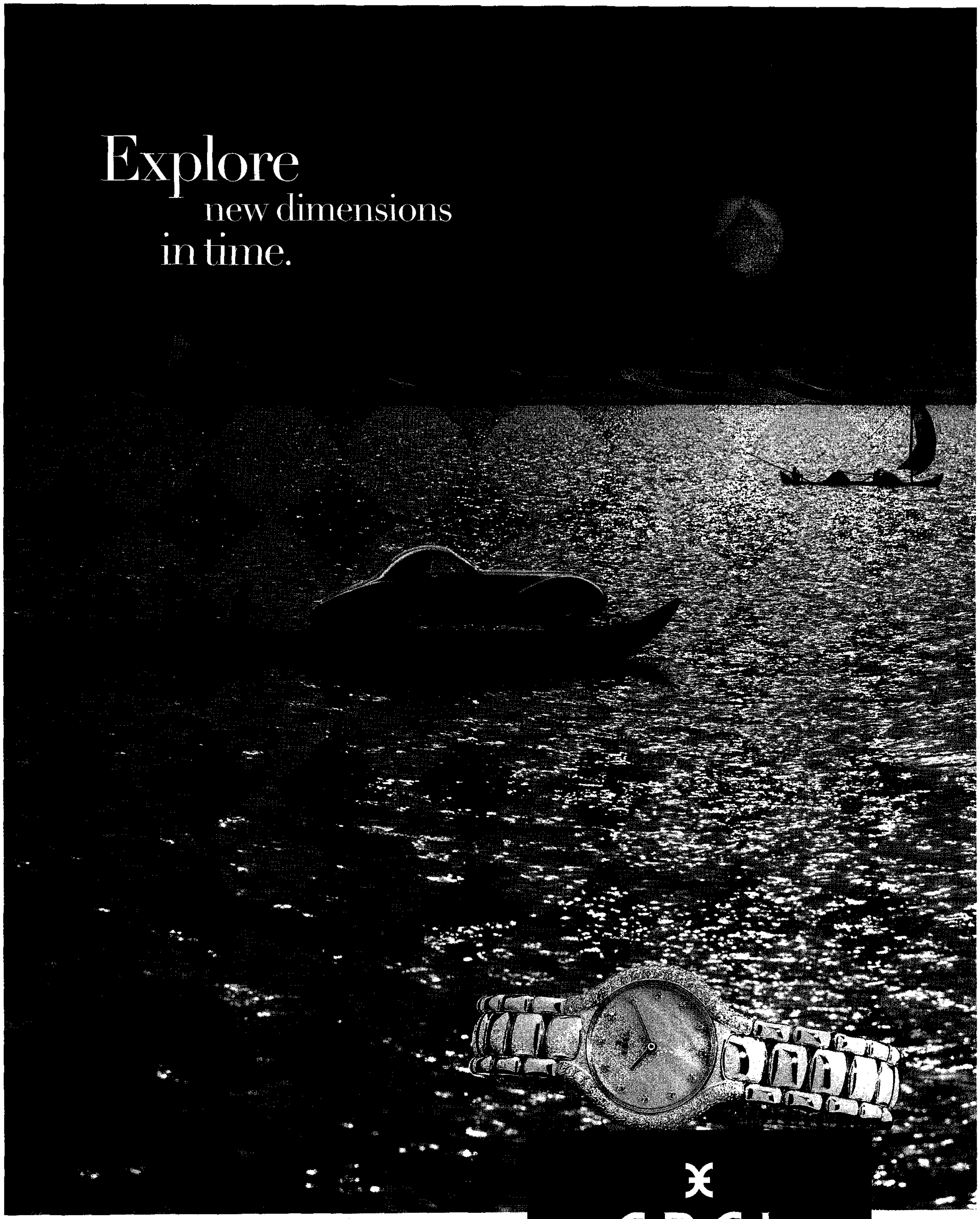

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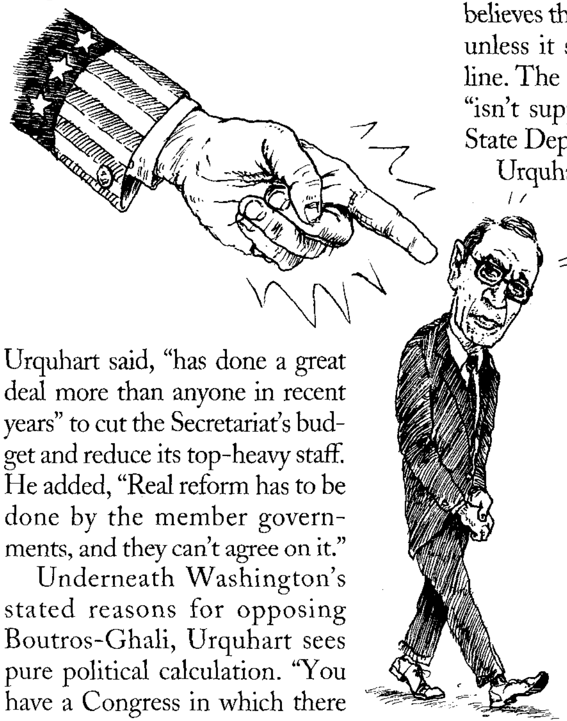
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

UNCLE SAM DOESN’T WANT YOU

THE current American campaign to block the reëlection of Boutros Boutros-Ghali to the Secretary-Generalship of the United Nations leaves Sir Brian Urquhart with an unhappy sense of déjà vu. Urquhart, who is seventy-seven, was the second civil servant hired by the U.N. Secretariat, in 1945, and through four decades was a close adviser to five Secretaries-General. He was the U.N.’s chief peacekeeper and probably the organization’s most widely respected professional. Urquhart has a long memory for superpower high-handedness. “We’ve been through all this before with the Soviet Union,” he said in a conversation last week. “The Soviets violently objected to the election of Trygve Lie, because Lie supported the American action in Korea, and then they violently objected to Dag Hammarskjöld.” The Soviets failed in both cases, and Hammarskjöld—about whom Urquhart wrote a biography—is now remembered as the most effective leader in U.N. history. Hammarskjöld’s positions sometimes differed sharply from Washington’s—for instance, over the American-sponsored coup in Guatemala, in 1954—but in time, Urquhart said, the American attitude toward the Secretary-General became “We don’t always agree with him, but he’s somebody whom everybody trusts.” The great casualty of the war over Boutros-Ghali, he said, has been this ideal of principled independence.

Since Urquhart, a native of Great Britain, retired from the U.N., ten years ago, he has written a biography of Ralph Bunche and also a memoir, “A Life in Peace and War,” which gives a matchless view of the inner workings of the famously byzantine institution. A flinty, plainspoken man, he does not confuse Boutros-Ghali, whom he called “quite an arrogant figure,” with Hammarskjöld. But he considers the American objections to the Secretary-General’s prickly personality “overdone,” and he is not much impressed with the criticism, heard often in Congress, that the Egyptian diplomat has failed to bring institutional reform. Boutros-Ghali, Urquhart said, “has done a great deal more than anyone in recent years” to cut the Secretariat’s budget and reduce its top-heavy staff. He added, “Real reform has to be done by the member governments, and they can’t agree on it.”



Boutros Boutros-Ghali

Underneath Washington’s stated reasons for opposing Boutros-Ghali, Urquhart sees pure political calculation. “You have a Congress in which there is a very strong element that is anti-internationalist, unilateralist, even isolationist—very xenophobic, extremely touchy, and, I think, very ignorant,” he said. The Clinton Administration’s decision to dump Boutros-Ghali, announced in June, was thus “a useful piece of meat to throw off the sled during the election. We’re talking not just about a person here but about an institution. And I think this is the reason that you have fourteen votes in the Security Council against the U.S. Even countries that don’t necessarily think that Boutros-Ghali is the right person—and I think quite a lot of them don’t—feel that this is an insult to the institution, and they have to stand up for it.” The U.S. refusal to pay dues—Washington now owes the U.N. one and a half billion dollars—has added injury to the insult. What is irritating even U.S. allies, Urquhart said, is the impression that, as the world’s only superpower, the U.S. believes that it can simply ignore the U.N. unless it serves its purpose or falls into line. The Secretary-General, as he put it, “isn’t supposed to be a member of the State Department.”

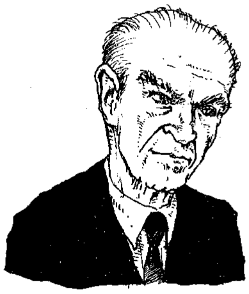
Urquhart is himself a sharp critic of the U.N., not only for past follies like equating Zionism with racism but for such longstanding embarrassments as the process of selecting a Secretary-General, which he described as “a last-minute, totally untransparent scramble.” He agreed that the U.N.’s peacekeeping mission in Bosnia had been a failure, but added that that was inevitable. Where the organization has stepped into the midst of disputes between nations, as in the Golan Heights, he said, it has succeeded in reducing violence to a minimum. “Civil wars are much harder to deal with than wars between states,” he explained. “States usually have a considerable motivation to stop fighting—they need a face-saving device, and we provide one. But when you’re dealing with a bunch of plug-uglies, like General Aidid or Mr. Mladic, they don’t have any obligation of that kind. You must be prepared to go in, take sides, and use force”—or not go in at all. Urquhart considers the Bosnian mission “a great face-saving device” for NATO, whose members were unwilling to intervene themselves.

The crises in Bosnia, Rwanda, and So-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JARRETT HUDDLESTON

GOING GENTLY

IMMEDIATELY after his death, earlier this month, my father, Alger Hiss, received a couple of spontaneous tributes that I think would have touched him deeply. His name was remembered in Sunday prayers at the Congregational Church in Peacham, Vermont, where my parents used to summer, long, long ago. And hundreds of miles away in his home town, Baltimore, one of the theatres put his name up on the marquee: "ALGER HISS, R.I.P."


Alger Hiss

It was only in his very last year, his ninety-second, that frailty actually kept him close to home. In his early eighties, he'd adjusted almost effortlessly to failing eyesight; relays of friends volunteered to stop by and read to him. As a child, Alger adored being read to by his favorite aunt, Lila; and as a young man he had read aloud, with enormous pride and pleasure, to Oliver Wendell Holmes, then eighty-nine.

Often, a reader was asked to take on a particular book that Alger hoped they'd both get a kick out of: "Madame Bovary," Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," "Ulysses," Euripides' "Iphigenia in Tauris," short stories by Flannery O'Connor and Doris Lessing, biographies of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Max Beerbohm, and a book debunking modern myths and pseudo science.

Two years ago, he called me up and said it was time for us to get started on the greatest biography of all—Boswell's "Life of Johnson." But first we'd have to read Johnson's own account of his journey to the Hebrides to check Boswell's accuracy. And probably we ought at least to skim Walter Jackson Bate's magisterial life of Johnson, to get a fix on Johnson himself. Staking out such a considerable project struck me as an enormously optimistic way to begin one's nineties.

This past year, Alger found that his movements had become increasingly unsteady, and he tired easily. Suddenly, it was almost impossible even to think about going outdoors. Now he relied on visitors for impressions from the world at large as well as from the world of books. He listened eagerly, for instance, to an account of Dwight Gooden's comeback no-hitter for the Yankees, and was moved when I told him about a day trip I took as his deputy to Toms River, in coastal New Jersey.

The local sixth graders at East Dover Elementary School, dressed in period costumes—which meant suits, ties, and fedoras for the boys and dresses and short white gloves for the girls—staged a faithful-except-for-one-detail reënactment of the Hiss case. The mock trial took place in a preserved eighteen-fifties courtroom before a standing-room-only crowd that included virtually all the judges of Ocean County. The students had spent most of a year studying the case, and their presentation of the evidence lasted about an hour. The one alteration of the historical record was that the jury found the defendant not guilty.

When my father was admitted to Lenox Hill Hospital, in mid-October, with acute bronchitis, he was still reaching out for news from beyond the hospital—he was pleased to hear that Clinton had been reëlected. And, on days when he had the strength, he actively participated in family undertakings. In our last long conversation, I told him that my five-year-old son, Jacob, had arrived home from a kindergarten field trip to an apple orchard with a woolly-bear caterpillar in the pocket of his parka, and didn't know what to name it. Alger suggested Monty Woolley.

When my wife and I told Jacob that his grandfather had died, four days after his ninety-second birthday, he asked, "Did Grandpa Alger have enough life?" We smiled and answered yes. —TONY HISS

malia represent a new kind of collapsing-state catastrophe, which the U.N. will have to learn to respond to—in part, Urquhart suggested, with some kind of "rapid-reaction capability." The Canadians have proposed just such a force. And in the more idealistic era of the 1992 Presidential campaign Bill Clinton championed something similar. When it comes to strengthening the U.N.'s role, Urquhart said, "the U.S. has sat on its hands because it's afraid that Helms"—Senator Jesse Helms—"will start screaming supernationalism and black helicopters and all that. We're in a silly season internationally. There's a myopic kind of movement which holds that this country can go back to the world before the First World War. But you can't."

MY LEFT FOOT

HERE is a simple story about forgery and family mythology. Joe Fox, an editor at Random House who died a year ago, had for many years wanted to own a painting by Richard Diebenkorn, especially one from his "Ocean Park" series—abstract versions, painted in the seventies, of the view through the windows of Diebenkorn's studio in Ocean Park, California. Fox talked so often about wanting a Diebenkorn painting that it was nearly a preoccupation.

Fox had five sons, one of whom, Blair, lived in Berkeley next door to a painter. When Fox discovered that the painter was Diebenkorn, who had moved from Ocean Park, he developed a fantasy that someday, while visiting his son, he would pass Diebenkorn's driveway as Diebenkorn was backing out in his car. Diebenkorn would bump into him and maybe knock him down. There would be a moment's awkwardness, perhaps a tear in a pants leg, some dusting off, then some gentlemanly, regimental-type talk along the lines of "No harm done." Diebenkorn would later send Fox a small painting from the "Ocean Park" series, possibly something on paper. Fox described this fantasy frequently enough that, about five years ago, a friend of his, William Benton, a poet, painted him a Diebenkorn. On the back of it he wrote a brief apology and signed Diebenkorn's name.

"I did it one evening at home," Ben-

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ton says. "A little joke. I gave it to him when we went out to dinner and never really thought about it again."

Fox hung the painting in his office. People would stop by and say, "Oh, you have a Diebenkorn, *how wonderful*."

"Literary types," Benton says. "What do they know."

When Fox died suddenly, last November, of a heart attack, he had been separated for several years from his second wife, Anne Isaak. A little while ago, Benton answered his phone, and heard her ask, "Do you know anything about Joe's owning a Diebenkorn?" Benton said that, as far as he knew, Fox didn't have one. Isaak said that the appraiser evaluating Fox's estate had found one among his possessions and had put a value on it from fifty to sixty thousand dollars. There was the question not only of taxes but also of what to do with the painting. Should it be sold and the money divided, or might one of the heirs have a special claim on it? Benton said that Fox surely would have got it through Leslie Feely, a New York dealer who specializes in Diebenkorn. That the appraiser had put such a price on his forgery never occurred to him.

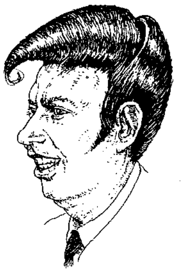
Isaak called Fox's sons to see what they knew, and she also called Feely, who said that she hadn't sold Fox a Diebenkorn. When Isaak told Benton this, a thought crossed his mind. "Yes, I think I know about this," he said.

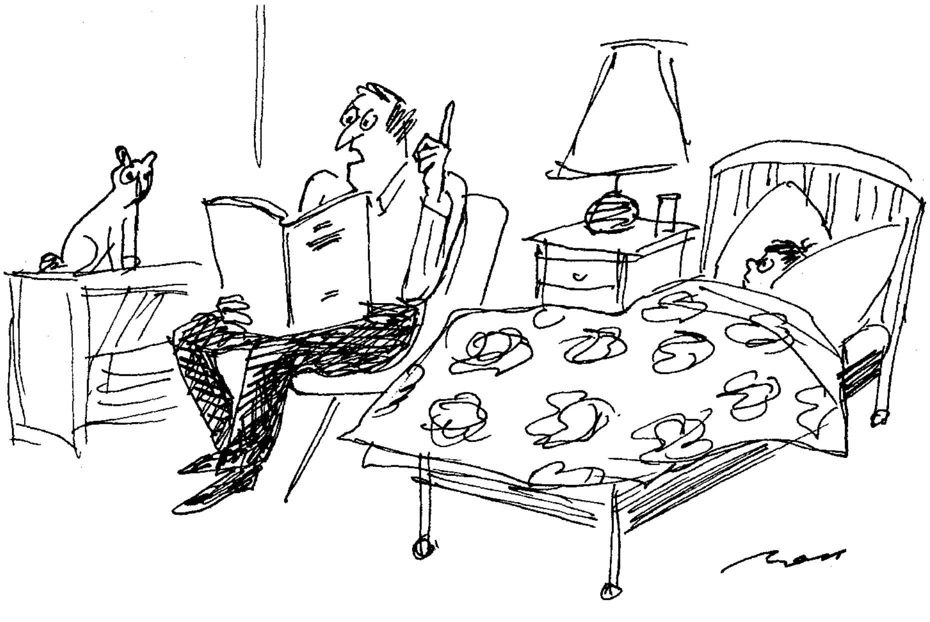
The painting now leans against the wall beside the basement stairs in Isaak's house. "I had been thinking anyway that it can't have been a very good Diebenkorn," Benton says. "In fact, I would say that it was probably a bad one. Otherwise, it would have been valued at a hundred thousand."

After Isaak and Benton spoke, one of Fox's sons left Isaak a message. "I'm pretty sure Dad *did* have a Diebenkorn," he said. "He got it five or six years ago. He was visiting my brother in California and Diebenkorn ran over his foot."

BEYOND THE FRINGE

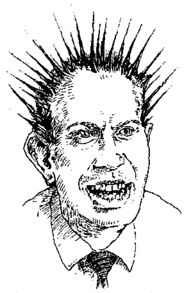
TONY BLAIR, the head of Britain's Labour Party, has, in effect, been running for Prime Minister for the past two and a half years. In America, reporters covering such a long-running campaign would have turned cynical by now. In Britain, they just get sillier. The latest polls showed Blair still well ahead of his Conservative rival, Prime Minister John Major, but with a worrisome handicap: only forty-three per cent of women polled said they actually *liked* Blair. Labour strategists were reportedly deliberating about how to make their leader more appealing to women, and recently the *Financial Times* revealed that they had found an answer. It was—quite simply—this: Tony Blair had "flattened his bouffant hair style" in a not so subtle ploy to woo women who were turned off by his previous coiffure. That this story was in the *Financial Times*, which generally is more interested in trade imbalances, was all the more reason to take it seriously.

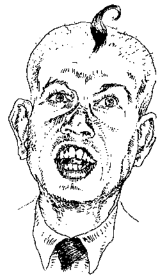




" 'Stop!' said former Mayor Koch."

Quickly, the *Daily Telegraph* brought in several prominent women to discuss the matter. Germaine Greer said that Blair's female problem had nothing to do with his hair and everything to do with his "chaotic" dentistry. Rabbi Julia Neuberger voiced skepticism about the problem while conceding that the Labour leader's hair had sometimes looked "as if it could do with a bit of a comb." Angela Flowers, the owner of an art gallery, said that Blair's fussing was futile, since John Major was naturally charismatic—that, in fact, there was "something kinky about him." Several other papers revived a rumor that Blair once spent sixty pounds on a haircut—a charge that a Labour spokesman immediately denounced as a lie. A pager message from a Blair staffer that reportedly read "Pls do something about the hair" was dredged up. And Blair's hair was added to a lengthening list of his fashion disasters, which, according to the *Daily Mail*, included wearing a short-sleeved T-shirt over a long-sleeved shirt and, on more than one occasion, shiny black shoes with jeans. The whispering began: Was Blair's new hair a sign of fundamental ineptitude? Or was it evidence of shameless calculation—a Clintonesque passion for discarding the old when it becomes a political liability?





Labour went on the attack. "This is the blackest day in the *F.T.'s* proud history," a spokesman declared, and, to quash the whole thing as a canard, the party released two identical photographs of Blair, one labelled "before," the other "after." This was followed by full disclosure from the man himself. In a written statement, the forty-three-year-old Blair made a confession: "My problem is not changing my hair, it's keeping it." ♦

"Uncle Sam Doesn't Want You," James Traub; "My Left Foot," Alec Wilkinson; "Beyond the Fringe," Geoff Shandler.

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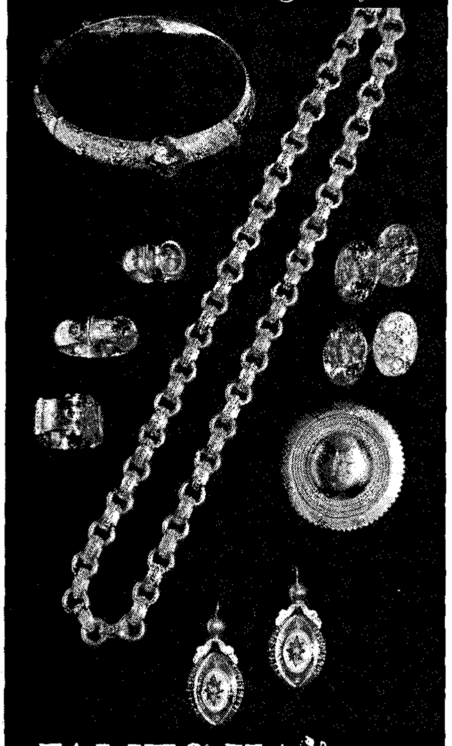

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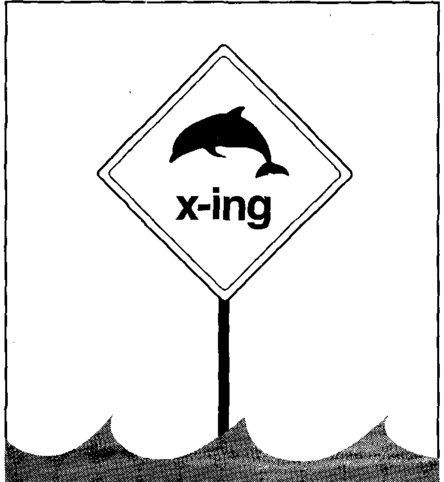

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THE DECLINE OF ECONOMICS

John Maynard Keynes was one of the most revered men of his time. Fifty years after his death, where are his successors?

BY JOHN CASSIDY

A FEW weeks ago, the Nobel Prize in Economics was awarded to William Vickrey, an eighty-two-year-old emeritus professor at Columbia, and James Mirrlees, a sixty-year-old professor at Cambridge. As is often the case with this annual ritual, the newspapers had some difficulty explaining the prize-winning work, which the Nobel committee referred to as "the economic theory of incentives under asymmetric information." Most news reports glossed over the details and instead stressed the supposed practical importance of the contributions Vickrey and Mirrlees had made: according to the *Wall Street Journal*, they "broke intellectual ground in a field that plays a role in issues as varied as tax policy, government bond auctions, and used-car sales." But when reporters tracked down Vickrey, an amiable bear of a man, he refused to play along with this charade: instead of expanding on the obscure mathematical theory that gained him world attention, he insisted on talking about his practical ideas for reforming the subways, the electoral system, the budget deficit, and much else besides. A *Times* reporter tried to pin him down, but Vickrey quickly dismissed his prize-winning 1961 paper as "one of my digressions into abstract economics." And he went on to say, "At best, it's of minor significance in terms of human welfare."

Vickrey died just three days after winning the prize, but his last words on his subject should not be forgotten. Here was a world-renowned theorist confirming what many outsiders had long suspected—that a good deal of modern economic theory, even the kind that wins Nobel Prizes, simply doesn't matter much. That is a great pity, because economics is supposed to be a useful subject, and its intellectual founders stressed its practical importance. In a famous passage of "The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money" John Maynard Keynes wrote, "The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else." Keynes's point was proved when, for a generation after the publication of "The General Theory," governments all around the world followed his advice on how to avoid a return to thirties-style slumps.

BRIAN CRONIN

Keynes died in 1946. In the fifty years since his death, economics has been transformed into an abstruse discipline that often appears to resemble a branch of mathematics. Recently, the pace of change has accelerated to such an extent that many economists—particularly middle-aged economists—hardly recognize their own discipline. "I look at the current graduate textbook, and I say, 'Thank God I am not starting out now,' " John Siegfried, a fifty-one-year-old economist at Vanderbilt University, told me.

If professors like Siegfried must struggle to keep up, it is hardly surprising that most of the public has quit even trying. Economists like Keynes, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Milton Friedman were popular authors, whose ambitious works appeared on the bookshelves (if not the bedside tables) of most concerned citizens. Today, even the most eminent economists are largely unknown outside their field, and it is hard to recall the last book by a member of the profession that sparked a national debate. Meanwhile, the few general-interest books that are published about economics tend to have titles like "Economists Can Be Bad for Your Health," "The Crisis of Vision in Economic Thought," and even "The Death of Economics."

Such titles are unfair to a subject that still has much to offer, but the fact remains that many economists are involved in intellectual pursuits that have little to do with the social issues dominating the newspaper headlines, such as inequality, poverty, and executive pay. Even those economists who do concern themselves with practical subjects often tackle them on a level so abstract that their work has few policy implications and, in the end, sometimes appears to be part of a giant academic game.

Consequently, politicians increasingly tend to ignore academic economists and turn elsewhere for guidance—to non-economists, bureaucrats, and self-styled public-policy experts. This process was clearly visible in the Clinton Administration's efforts to reform health care and welfare, two subjects about which economists should (and do) have valuable things to say. In both instances, professional economists were largely excluded from policy discussions, and, as a result, the White House's proposals were widely criticized for not paying enough attention to basic economic ideas, such as incentives and efficiency.

But it is not just the politicians who are turning away from the dismal science. Between 1992 and 1994, the number of undergraduates majoring in economics at American universities fell by almost fifteen per cent. At élite liberal-arts colleges—places like Swarthmore, Oberlin, and Amherst—the slide was more than thirty per cent. In graduate programs, too, the number of American students has fallen sharply. In the mid-nineteen-seventies, about three-quarters of all Ph.D. students in economics were American citizens. Now the proportion is less than half, and, in many schools, much less.

The falloff is not surprising. Most students take up economics not out of any innate love for supply-and-demand curves but because they think that it will get them a decent job. In recent years, however, some of the biggest companies in the country, including I.B.M., General Electric, and Kodak, have closed down their economics departments. Meanwhile, many of the fastest-growing businesses in the economy—notably technology giants like Microsoft and Intel—have managed to prosper with the aid of hardly any economists at all. And while some of these developments are undoubtedly due to forces external to the economics profession, many people in business believe that economists have only themselves to blame. "Academic economics has taken a very bad turn in the road," Mark Dadd, the senior economist at A.T. & T., who is also chairman of the National Association of Business Economists, told me. "It's very academic, very mathematical, and it really doesn't— I want to choose my words carefully here: it is nothing like as useful to the business community as it could be."

Even on Wall Street, which has traditionally provided a rewarding outlet for economists, there has been a reaction against the subject. Morgan Stanley, for example, will not hire economics Ph.D.s unless they also have substantial experience outside academe. "We insist on at least a three-to-four-year cleansing experience to neutralize the brainwashing that takes place in these

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"He could have been the national bird, but that was a long, long time ago."

graduate programs," I was told by Stephen Roche, who heads the global-economics group at that investment bank.

If economics had made the same intellectual progress as physics or chemistry, it wouldn't matter that it often appears baffling and impenetrable to the layman. Few nonscientists complain that they don't understand Kepler's laws of planetary motion or Einstein's theory of relativity: they are content to accept that the theories explain how the universe really works. (The earth keeps on revolving around the sun, after all, and atomic bombs do explode.) Fifty years ago, many economists held out similar hopes for their subject. In 1947, Paul Samuelson, a young professor at M.I.T., published "Foundations of Economic Analysis"—a pioneering monograph not to be confused with his famous textbook, "Economics," which is now in its fifteenth edition. Other economists had used mathematics before Samuelson, but he was the first to integrate the techniques of differential calculus, which had been used to great effect in physics, into a unified approach that could be used to study almost any economic problem.

The key idea underlying Samuelson's methodology, which is now known as neoclassical economics, is that both companies and consumers can be treated as rational decision-makers, who attempt to maximize some sorts of mathematical function. (In the case of companies, it is a profit function; with consumers, it is some sort of happiness—or "utility"—function.) This may sound unrealistic, but it has led to significant advances in areas as diverse as finance, education, and international trade. Anyone who doubts whether economics has made any progress in the last few decades need only compare the first and the fifteenth editions of Samuelson's classic textbook: a lot of material that is included in the later printing hadn't been invented when he wrote the first version.

Moreover, some of the theory has been put to work in the real world. For example, most of the finance theory taught to M.B.A. students is applied neoclassical economics. And not all professional economists are impractical theoreticians. Lawrence Summers, a former Harvard professor of economics, who is now Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, said recently, "The people who are architects of economic reform all over the world are increasingly Ph.D. economists with fancy American training. And this Administration has had more first-rate academics, probably, than any in American history."

Nonetheless, it is gradually becoming clear that the attempt to convert economics into an exact science has failed. Most of the economics that works is relatively simple, and attempts to construct more elaborate mathematical theories have usually come unstuck. What is more, a number of important economic phenomena remain beyond our comprehension. The two most significant developments in the American economy over the past twenty years are the slowdown in productivity growth and the increase in wage inequality, and honest economists admit that they don't have an adequate explanation for either. "We don't know why productivity growth slowed down, and we don't really understand why wage inequality has grown," Greg Mankiw, of Harvard, said. "We say it's technology, and that's what you say when you don't understand something. Economics is a primitive science, and there's a lot we don't know."

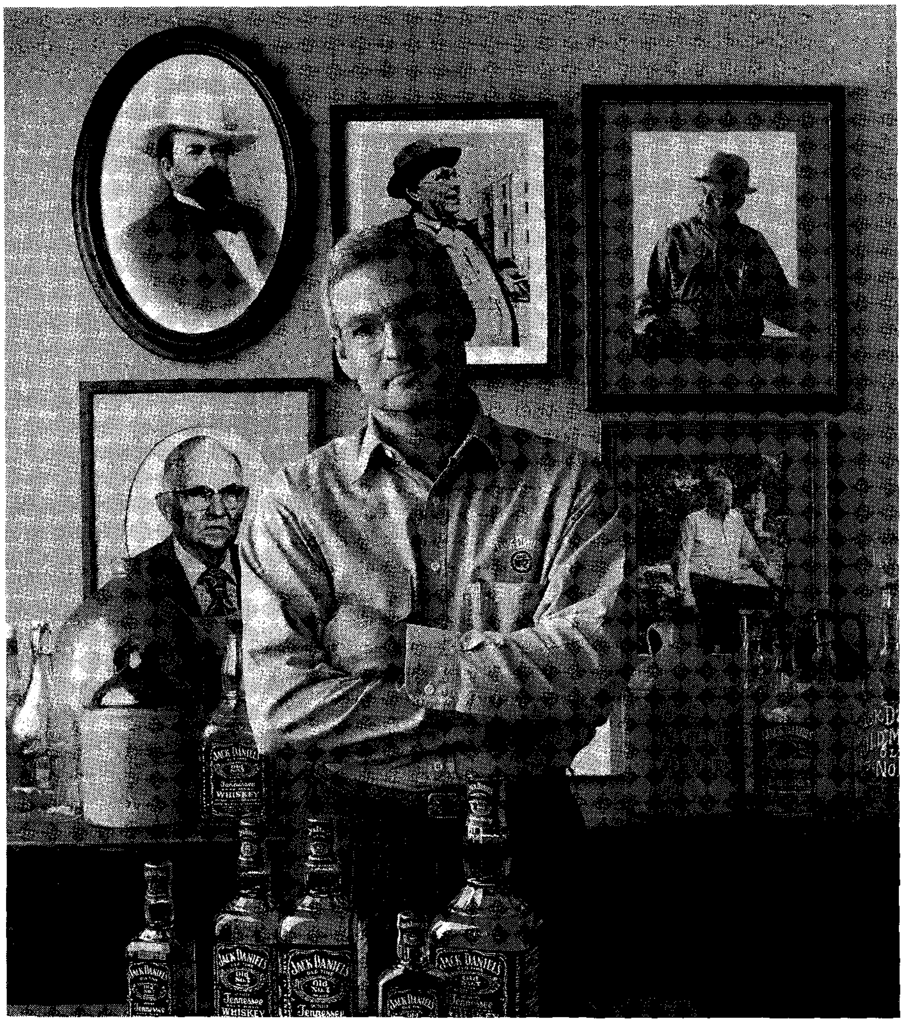
Economists don't even have an agreed-upon story of how the economy as a whole works. For the first twenty-five years after the Second World War, most economists believed in some version of the Keynesian model, which granted government a major role in directing the economy. But in the early nineteen-seventies this model appeared to break down, and many economists rejected Keynesianism, turning instead to a radical new theory, invented by Robert Lucas, a product of the Chicago school of economics, which is skeptical about government intervention in the economy. In recent years, however, Lucas's approach has been largely discredited, and there is little agreement on what should replace it.

As a result of these failures, there is now widespread skepticism about the usefulness of ever more complex theories, especially among policymakers. Alan Blinder, a Princeton professor and a former vice-chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, told me, "The kinds of economics that are useful to people in government and the financial markets is the very workaday, far-from-the-frontier economics—and it wouldn't hurt to call it Keynesian, although people don't like to use that term."

Keynes was trained as a mathematician, but he shunned formalism in his economic writings. He regarded economics as "a branch of logic," not a "pseudo natural science"—an attitude he picked up from his teacher, the great Victorian economist Alfred Marshall. In his "Principles of Economics," which was published in 1890, Marshall argued that most economic phenomena "do not lend themselves easily to mathematical expression," and warned that economists needed to guard against "assigning wrong proportions to economic forces; those elements being most emphasized which lend themselves most easily to analytical methods."

The history of postwar economics shows what happens if Marshall's advice is ignored. Mathematics, which used to be considered a valuable but subordinate aid to intuitive thought, now dominates economics to such an extent that good ideas are often ignored by professional economists simply because they are not written down in pages of algebra. Similarly, bad ideas that are expressed in clever mathematical models tend to survive even if they are contradicted by the evidence. A good example of this process at work is the development of Keynes's field, macroeconomics, which is the area of economics that deals with economy-wide issues such as inflation and unemployment.

KEYNES was a polymath, whose writings ranged from Indian currency reform to probability theory. But his most fundamental insight was that the economy as a whole does not work like a single market, where prices move quickly to equate supply and demand. To understand what this means, consider the market for East Side apartments. If there are too many apart-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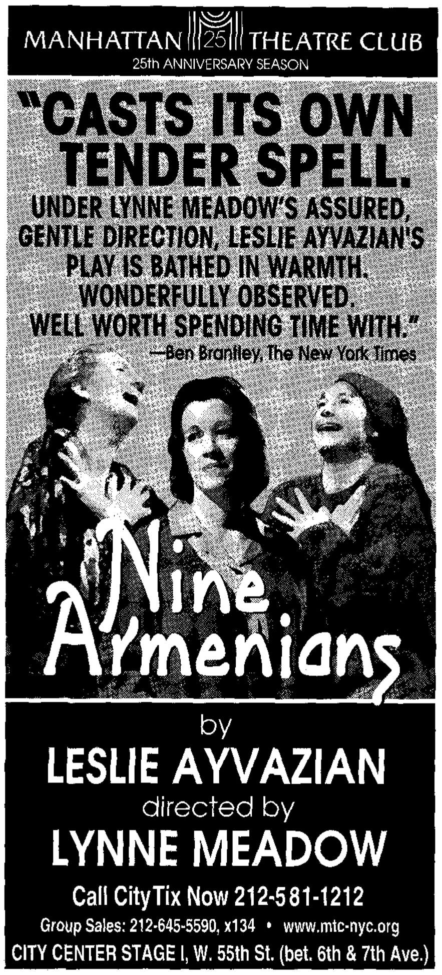
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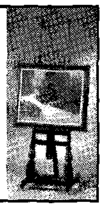
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ments for sale relative to the number of prospective buyers, prices will fall, thereby attracting new buyers into the area. Pretty soon, prices will stabilize, with the numbers of buyers and sellers at roughly the same level. But in the economy as a whole, Keynes pointed out, there may be no way for prices to adjust quickly in a similar fashion. In this case, many markets, including the market for workers, may remain out of balance for long periods, with "effective demand" far below the available supply—a situation we call recession. The only way to pull the country out of such a slump, Keynes argued, is for the government to inject more demand into the economy—by cutting taxes or raising government spending, for example.

This theory was not derived mathematically from the decisions of individual firms and consumers, as Samuelson would later recommend, but it seemed to work, so most economists accepted it. By the late nineteen-sixties, Keynes's ideas had been converted into several large-scale statistical models of the American economy, the most famous of which was known as the M.P.S. model. Devised by economists at M.I.T. and Penn, it was used by the Fed to help formulate policy.

An important element of the Keynesian models was an equation predicting that inflation will fall when unemployment rises—a relationship known as the Phillips curve. But in the early nineteen-seventies this didn't happen. Instead, unemployment and inflation rose sharply at the same time—a phenomenon that was dubbed stagflation. As the public groaned and the stock market fell, economists were forced to throw up their hands and admit that they couldn't fully explain what was going on.

Into this intellectual void stepped Robert Lucas. In a series of papers, which won Lucas the 1995 Nobel Prize for economics, he declared Keynesianism to be dead, and substituted for it a new methodology, which quickly became known as rational-expectations monetarism. (Recently, the work of Lucas and his followers has been rechristened new classical economics.) Lucas returned to Samuelson's basic idea that economic theories should start out with rational decisions of individuals and build from there. To simplify matters, he made two crucial assumptions: supply always equals demand throughout the economy, and everybody knows exactly how the economy works. Building on these foundations, and using a lot of complex mathematics, Lucas came up with two remarkable results: first, policy changes by the Fed would have no effect on the economy if the public expected those changes; and, second, the only way the Fed could affect unemployment and output was to surprise the markets with unexpected interest-rate changes, but if it tried to do this on a regular basis it would end up destabilizing the economy.

Lucas turned Keynesian economics on its head. The central implication of his model was that the Fed should give up actively trying to guide the economy and, instead, simply concentrate on making the money supply grow at a constant rate. (Hence the term "monetarism.") If the Fed persisted in the fine-tuning policy that it had followed since the war, it would destabilize the economy. Lucas argued that many recessions in the past could be explained by misguided monetary policy of this type.

Versions of Lucas's theories were quickly embraced by conservative politicians from Ronald Reagan to Margaret Thatcher. His work was also hailed by fellow-economists, who rapidly discovered that its mathematical complexity offered endless scope for technical amplification. Dozens of prominent careers were made by extending Lucas's results, and millions of student-hours were invested in acquiring the mathematical skills needed to do economics as he did it. Meanwhile, academic economists largely gave up on the prosaic Keynesian task of trying to build statistical models that tracked economic variables in the outside world. By 1980, Lucas could justifiably boast, "One cannot find good, under-forty economists who identify themselves or their work as Keynesian. . . . At research seminars, people don't take Keynesian theorizing seriously anymore: the audience starts to whisper and giggle to one another.”

Outside the universities, however, the policymakers who had to deal with the real economy were not laughing. They were finding out that Lucas's theories didn't work. From the mid-nineteen-seventies onward, a number of empirical studies were carried out attempting to confirm his claim that changes in monetary policy did not have any systematic impact on the economy. Virtually every one of these studies found that, pace Lucas, the actions of the Fed did have substantial and long-lasting effects on output, unemployment, and numerous other economic variables. Moreover, this was true regardless of whether the policy changes were expected or unexpected.

Lucas's ideas have also come under strong theoretical attack. Critics point out that most of his results are based on the assumption that supply always equals demand. If that is true, then involuntary unemployment cannot exist, since what this phrase means is that the supply of workers is greater than the demand for them. This is clearly unrealistic, but if the supply-equals-demand assumption is dropped, few of Lucas's conclusions hold up.

The most important setback to Lucas's theories was dealt by Paul Volcker, the cigar-smoking chairman of the Fed. Between 1979 and 1982, Volcker raised short-term interest rates to nineteen per cent from ten in a successful but costly attempt to reduce inflation. As the cost of credit rose, tens of thousands of businesses went bankrupt, the economy fell into recession, and unemployment climbed to nine and a half per cent—its highest level since the Great Depression. This was precisely what simple Keynesian models had predicted would happen, but it was a blatant contradiction of Lucas's theory, which said that interest-rate changes of the type adopted by Volcker would not have much impact on the economy.

Since that experience, policymakers in the White House and at the Fed have tended to ignore the advice of Lucas and his followers. “It's very clear that new classical economics is irrelevant,” Joseph Stiglitz, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, told me. “You can't begin with the assumption of full employment when the President is worried about jobs—not only this President but any President.”

When I interviewed Lucas recently at his office, on Chicago's South Side, he readily admitted that his theory hadn't worked out as well as he had hoped. At sixty, Lucas is gray-haired, bespectacled, and a touch sallow. I had expected an impassioned ideologue in the mold of Friedman, who had been Lucas's graduate supervisor, but Lucas turned out to be low-key and willing to question his own beliefs about how to do economics. “I write down a bunch of equations, and I say this equation has to do with people's preferences and this equation is a description of the technology,” he said. “But that doesn't make it so. Maybe I'm right, maybe I'm wrong. That has to be a matter of evidence.”

Lucas readily conceded that the evidence had discredited his suggestions that unexpected changes in monetary policy were the main cause of recessions and booms. “Monetary shocks just aren't that important. That's the view I've been driven to,” he said. “There's no question, that's a retreat in my views.”

Despite this retreat, Lucas's methodology still dominates macroeconomic research. On one side of macroeconomics are the real-business-cycle theorists, who model the economy in almost exactly the same way that he did in the nineteen-seventies, just adding a few new twists. Dozens of empirical studies have concluded that real-business-cycle models cannot explain economic fluctuations any better than Lucas's original effort, but the theory has survived and prospered, its users apparently oblivious of its practical irrelevance.

On the other side of the subject are the New Keynesians, who, despite their name, accept Lucas's central claim that everything must be derived from the decisions of individual companies and consumers. In fact, the primary aim of this school of thought is to prove that familiar Keynesian results can be derived from models that are just as complex and mathematical as those of Lucas.

To the outsider, the most obvious result of these developments is that macroeconomics has become increasingly abstract and remote from the real world. The problem has got so bad that the

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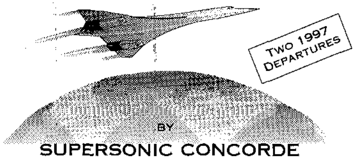

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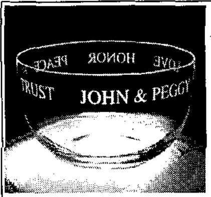

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economic-forecasting firms are having difficulty finding young economists who can analyze the world in a non-Lucasian manner—a point that was made to me by Laurence Meyer, a fifty-two-year-old economist who became a governor of the Federal Reserve Board earlier this year. Before arriving at the Fed, Meyer, who obtained a Ph.D. from M.I.T. during the nineteen-sixties, ran one of the most successful forecasting firms in the country—Macroeconomic Advisers, of St. Louis.

"In our firm, we always thanked Robert Lucas for giving us a virtual monopoly," Meyer told me when I visited him recently. "Because of Lucas and others, for two decades no graduate students were trained who were capable of competing with us by building econometric models that had a hope of explaining short-run output and price dynamics. We educated a lot of macroeconomists who were trained to do only two things—teach macroeconomics to graduate students and publish in the journals."

Meyer also pointed out that the large-scale Keynesian models that Lucas criticized have actually tracked the economy pretty accurately since the mid-nineteen-seventies, when they were modified to deal with some of his criticisms. The Fed and the White House still use these models, as do most foreign governments. Even the much-derided Phillips curve has made a comeback, albeit in an updated form that allows for the role of expectations in the inflation process. "People who have spent their lives doing macroeconomic forecasting and policy analysis know that over the last twenty-five years the Phillips curve has been the single most reliable tool in their tool kit," Meyer said. Meyer dismissed Lucas's followers as practitioners of what he terms closed-blind economics, saying mockingly, "When you close your blinds, you don't look out of your window and you don't care what's happening out there. You don't try to build models which are consistent with the real world. With the blinds closed, it's hard to see anything."

MACROECONOMICS is by no means the only area of economics where sophisticated mathematical models have failed to deliver the promises made by their early champions. The pattern has been repeated all across the subject. One of the best examples is the development of general equilibrium theory, a complex field devoted to explaining how all the different markets in the economy interact.

In the early nineteen-fifties, two Nobel Prize-winning mathematical economists, Kenneth Arrow and Gerard Debreu, proved that under certain conditions the free market will allocate resources efficiently (in the sense that it will produce an outcome in which nobody can be made better off without somebody else being made worse off). This result, which was proved using fancy mathematics, seemed to confirm Adam Smith's claim that the "invisible hand" produces a desirable outcome without any government intervention, and it was immediately seized upon as providing a rigorous intellectual justification of capitalism.

In fact, it did no such thing. As other economists penetrated the dense thickets of algebra surrounding Arrow and Debreu's result, they gradually realized that the theory was based on a number of unrealistic assumptions, all of which were necessary for the conclusion to hold true. These days, general equilibrium theory is widely regarded as a splendid intellectual curiosity rather than as a model of reality. "The models were fundamentally wrong in that they assumed perfect information, perfect competition, and no technical change," Joseph Stiglitz said to me. "Anybody looking at those models would say they can't provide a good description of the modern world."

The intellectual companion to general equilibrium theory is game theory, the study of strategic decision-making. The subject was invented in the nineteen-forties by John Von Neumann, the Hungarian-born mathematical genius, and is now a required element in most economics programs. At the research level, it is so popular that it often seems to dominate economics journals to the exclusion of all else.

Game theory's great appeal is its flexibility. Its mathematical methods can be applied to almost any situation where the welfare of one decision-maker is dependent on the actions of another. Some obvious examples include arms races, trade policies, and

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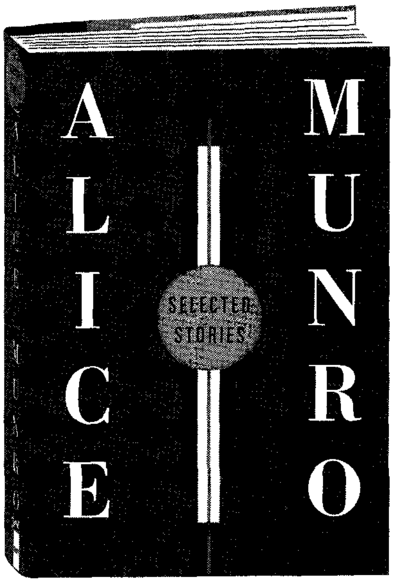

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who, as the poem trembled
to the death of its god,
drew back in fear
and so came to be noticed
by the demon who so resembled
her sworn enemy in her department,
with his bleak chin and his knowing look.
Though prodded by him she did write the book

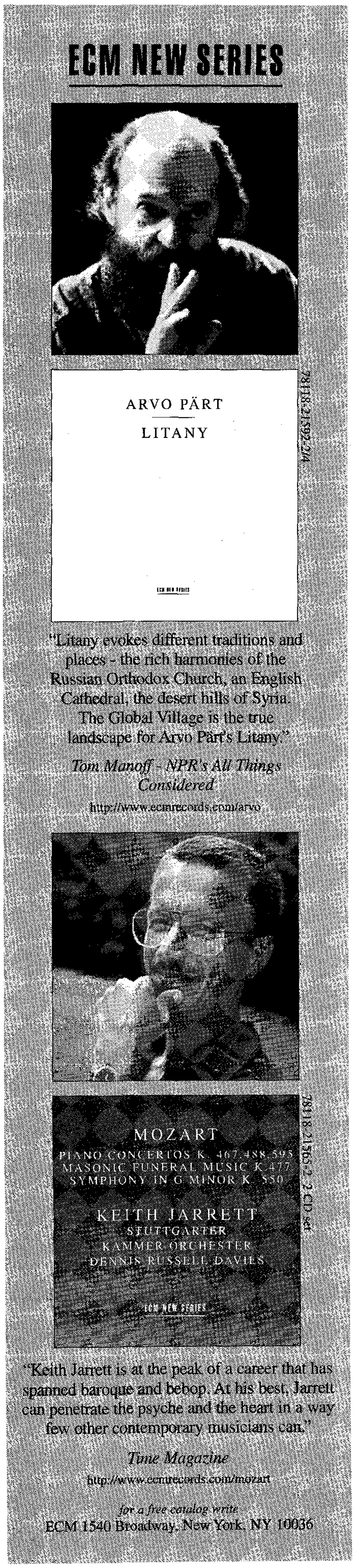
that captured it all—god, demon, lover, avatar,
the ascension by night, the great battle,
the sobbing behind the ruined lattice—
and suspended it between her mother tongues
in the cat's cradle of her scholarly apparatus—
made from shards, really, but mysteriously there.

—Vijay Seshadri

commercial price wars. Unfortunately, the theory also has a major drawback. It gets extremely complicated if games can be replayed or if the number of decision-makers involved is greater than two, both of which tend to be the case in reality. In situations like this, there is often more than one solution to the game, with no way to choose between them. Worse, there is sometimes no solution at all. In either case, game theory simply can't predict what will happen in a given situation—quite a drawback for a science that prides itself on providing definite answers to behavioral questions. "Noncoöperative game theory . . . has had a great run in economics over the past decade or two," David Kreps, a Stanford game theorist, wrote recently. "We (economic theorists and economists more broadly) need to keep a better sense of proportion about where and when to use it."

So far, there is little evidence that Kreps' colleagues are heeding his advice. The latest issue of *The American Economic Review*, a leading economics journal, contains no fewer than six game-theoretic articles, on topics as diverse as setting interest rates, making charitable contributions, and selling nuclear weapons. The issue even includes a game-theoretic appraisal of "The Price Is Right," the popular television show on which a number of rival contestants bid for prizes. After detailed inspection of past episodes, the authors reach the conclusion that most contestants follow simple rules of thumb, such as offering the amount that they think the prizes are actually worth, rather than solving mathematical optimization problems in deciding what to bid. The article's reluctant conclusion: "Our results indicate that rational decision theory cannot explain contestant behavior on 'The Price Is Right.' "

Of course, not everybody in economics agrees that the subject is in trouble. When I visited Paul Samuelson a few weeks ago in his office, overlooking the Charles River, the diminutive eighty-one-year-old was feisty and upbeat. "Math is a problem for everybody in the profession, and it has been



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for years," he said dismissively. "People always say, 'These whippersnappers are going too far.' " To him, he made clear, the escalating mathematical sophistication of economics is a sign of intellectual progress, not regression. "It takes strong math to defeat misleading math," he said defiantly.

Even when I brought up the Lucas school, which Samuelson has criticized for being unrealistic, he was unapologetic. "I applaud the fact that Robert Lucas received the Nobel Prize. I thought it was overdue," he said. Samuelson won the Nobel for economics in 1970. His only concession to my line of questioning was to say that the increasing use of mathematics had produced a difficulty in translating to the outside world what economists were doing. "It does lead to a tough communication problem," he said. "The number of people in the profession who can communicate effectively is very small."

One of the few good communicators is Greg Mankiw, a thirty-five-year-old Harvard professor who has already published a widely acclaimed textbook on macroeconomics. Now, armed with a vast publisher's advance, he is writing an introductory text designed to replace Samuelson's famous tome. "If you read a textbook today, you will get a much better understanding of the world than you did sixty years ago," he told me when I dropped in on him shortly after seeing Samuelson. "But if you ask me, 'Is economics making enough progress to justify the millions of dollars a year that the taxpayer spends to subsidize economic research?,' the answer is no. I think economists are probably overfunded, given the rate at which we make progress."

This was the first time I had ever heard an academic suggest a cut in funding for his own subject, but Mankiw was unequivocal about it, even when I suggested that his views would not be popular with his colleagues, many of whom receive federally financed grants. "Economists are like dairy farmers. We think we deserve every penny we get," he replied.

Mankiw stressed that he wasn't suggesting that economics is not worth studying. On the contrary, he said, it should be a compulsory subject in high school and college, so that every educated citizen gets a grasp of basic eco-

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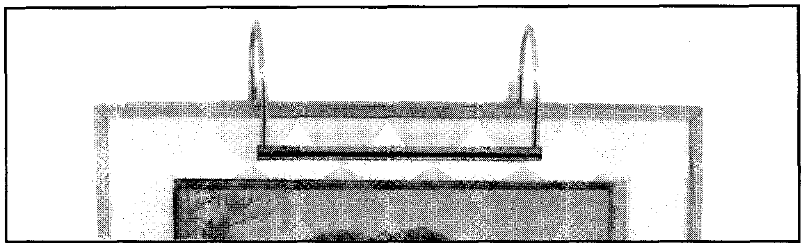

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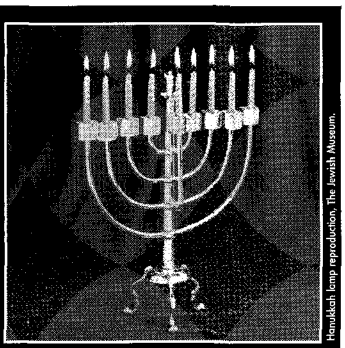

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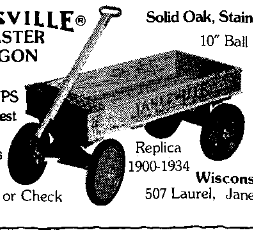

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nomic ideas, such as the law of supply and demand and the benefits of trade. "We need more well-trained high-school teachers of economics, not more Ph.D. economists," Mankiw said. "If you spend a year studying economics, you learn a tremendous amount. If you spend five years studying it the learning process slows down very quickly."

MANKIW isn't the only economist who is questioning the direction the subject has taken. Prominent among these skeptics are David Card and Alan Krueger, two Princeton scholars who have challenged the neoclassical shibboleth that minimum-wage laws always destroy jobs.

Card and Krueger didn't just question the conventional wisdom; they attacked it in a novel and powerful way. Instead of concocting a mathematical model and "testing" it with advanced statistical techniques, which is what most economists call research, they decided to test the theory in the real world. To do so, they conducted a telephone poll of four hundred fast-food restaurants before and after New Jersey raised its minimum wage from $4.25 to $5.05, in April of 1992. In their recent book, "Myth and Measurement: The New Economics of the Minimum Wage," they described what they discovered: "Relative to restaurants in Pennsylvania, where the minimum wage remained unchanged, we find that employment in New Jersey restaurants actually *expanded* with the increase in the minimum wage."

The work of Card and Krueger was worth a hundred theoretical models in *The American Economic Review*. Until their findings were published, the majority of economists, including many liberals, opposed minimum-wage increases on the ground that they always increase unemployment and hurt the poor. Now nobody can make that claim with confidence, and, as a result, the intellectual opposition to this year's rise in the national minimum wage was blunted.

Despite such signs of life, most economists remain wedded to their elaborate and far-fetched models. Indeed, the economics profession has already demonstrated that it is impervious to criticism—even harsh internal criticism. Back in 1991, the Commission on Graduate Education in Economics, a group of twelve eminent economists, issued a report saying it feared that the universities were churning out a generation of "*idiots savants*, skilled in technique but innocent of real economic issues." The commission described the state of academic economics in damning detail, but five years later little, if anything, has changed. "That report took a lot of time and energy on the part of everybody involved," Stanford professor Anne Krueger, who headed the commission, told me. "Yet, basically, if only the report and a pin had dropped at the same time, the pin would have sounded noisy."

Clearly, drastic action of some sort is needed. "Economics," Keynes wrote in 1937, "is a science of thinking in terms of models, joined to the art of choosing models which are relevant to the contemporary world." One way to encourage economists to become more worldly might be to abolish the Nobel Prize for economics, which since its introduction, in 1969, has helped foster a professional culture that values technical wizardry above all else. Such a move would be controversial, but it could readily be justified on intellectual grounds. As Milton Friedman argued many years ago, the real test of any scientific model is how much it explains with how little. Judged by this criterion, most recent economic theories fare badly: they use a lot of mathematics and many hidden assumptions, but their explanatory power is weak—far weaker than most of the work that wins Nobel Prizes in the natural sciences. What is more, as William Vickrey admitted, a lot of contemporary economics has little to do with improving human welfare, which was supposed to be the whole point of Alfred Nobel's bequest. Deprived of the publicity surrounding the annual Stockholm ceremony, economists would actually have to do something useful to get noticed. It might take them some time to get there, but in the end the experience would be salutary. ♦

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[*Senator Alan Simpson in Newsday*]

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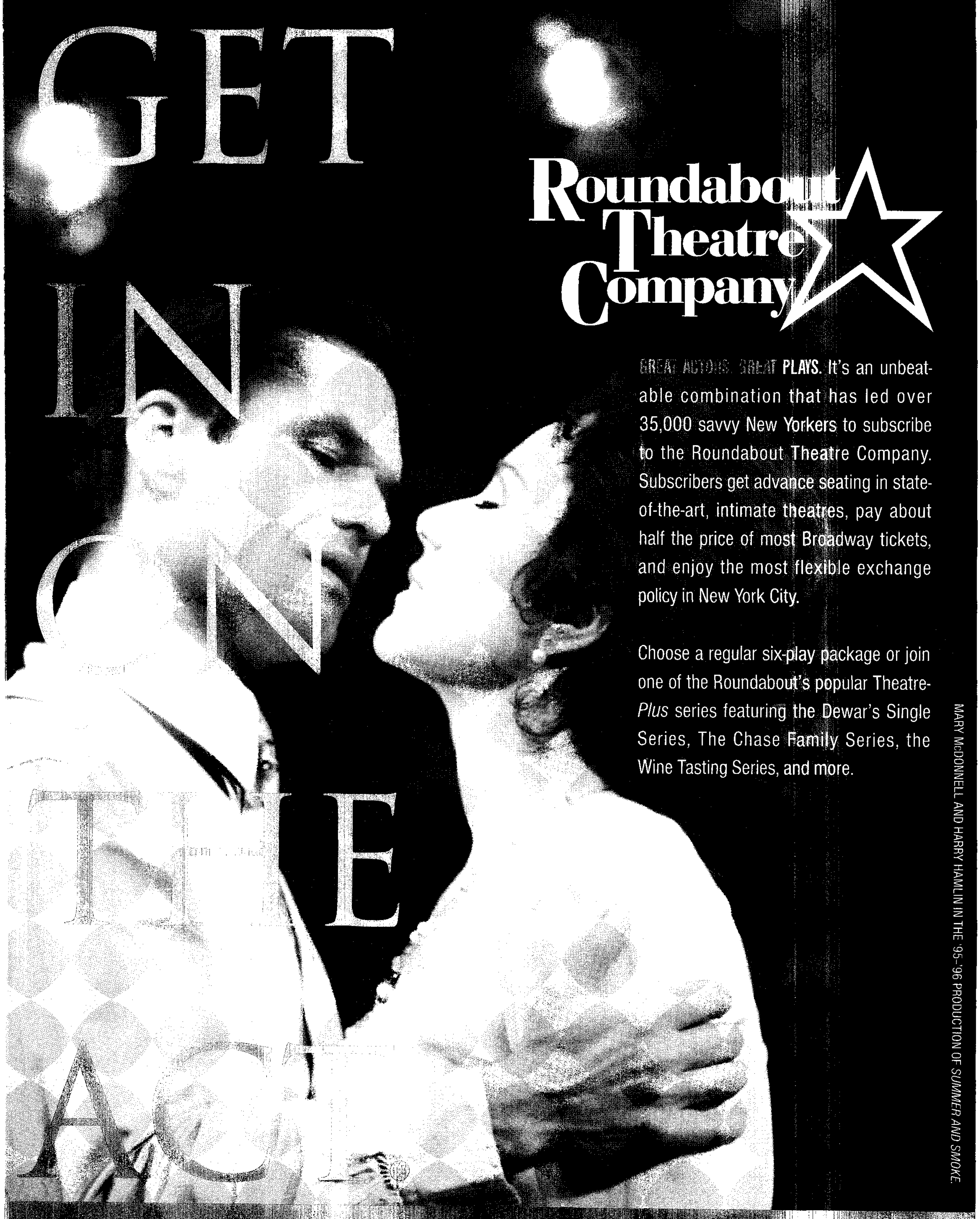

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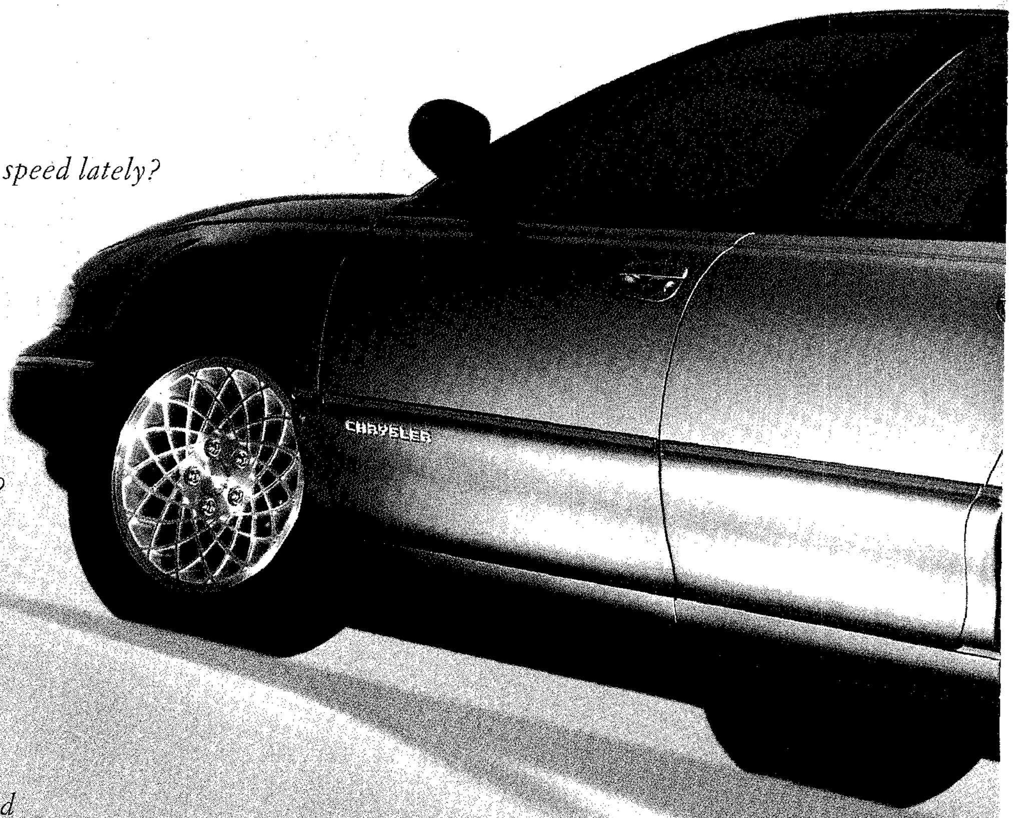

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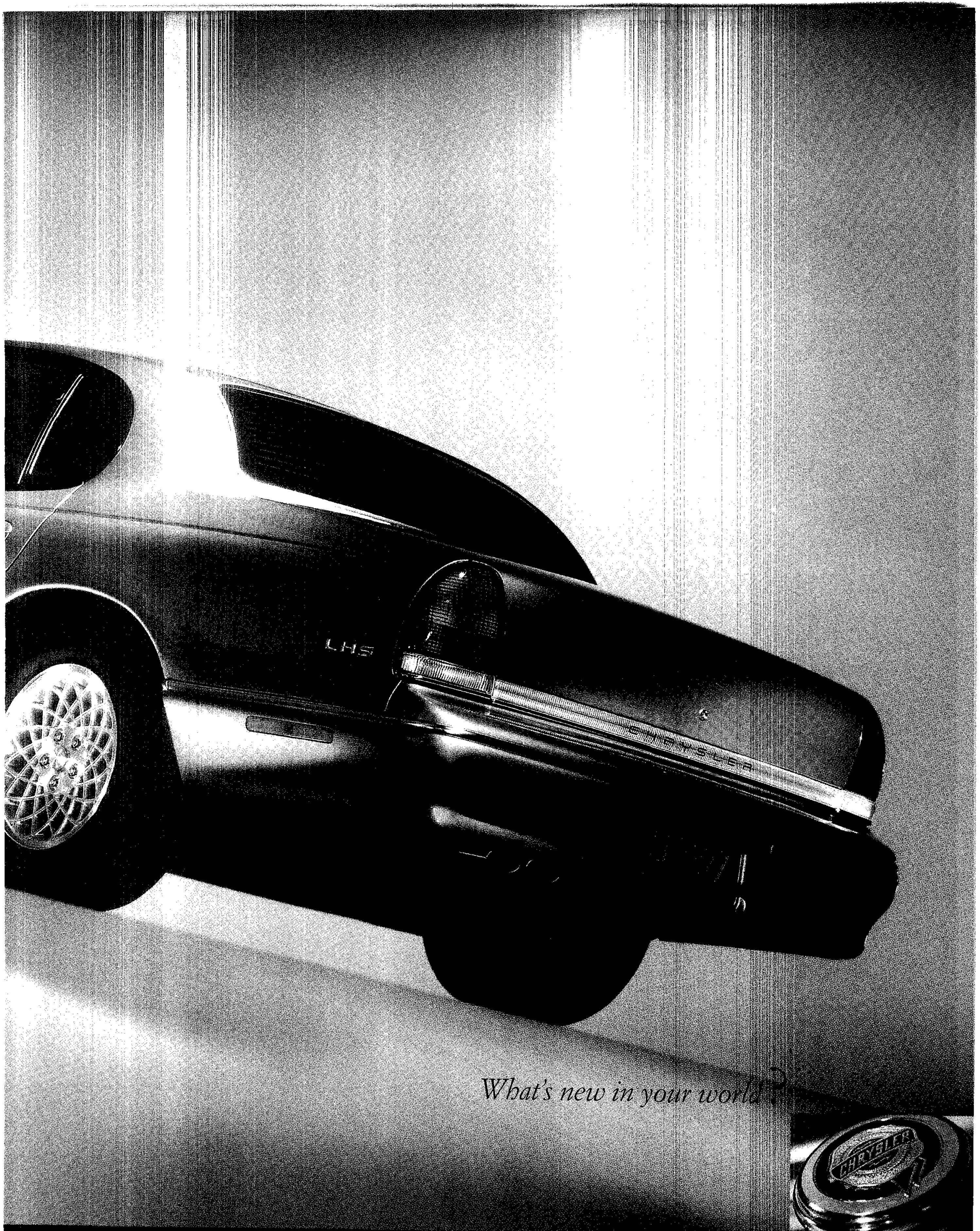
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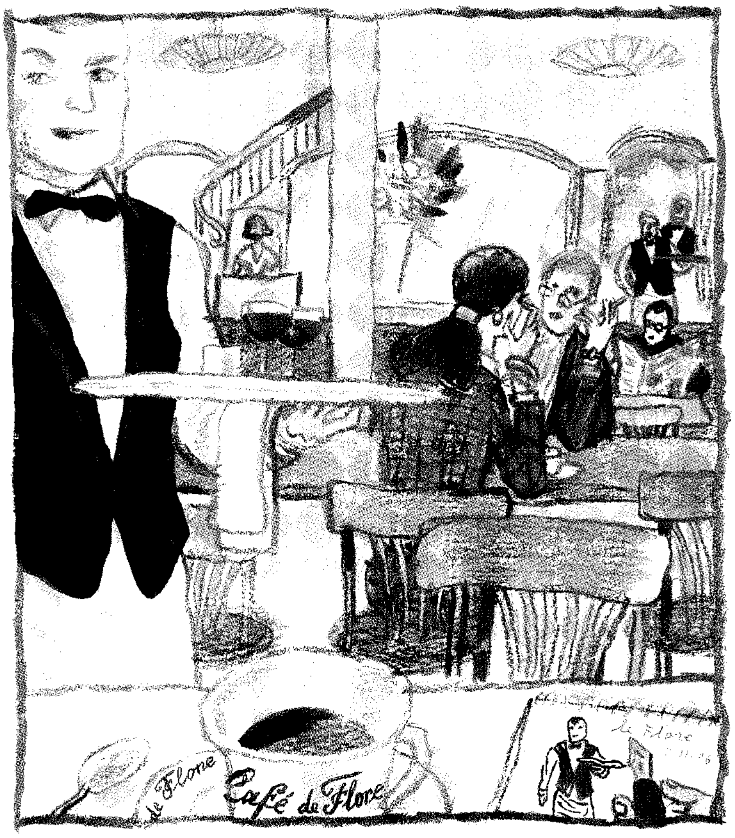
PARIS JOURNAL

A TALE OF TWO CAFÉS

What's the difference between the Flore and the Deux Magots? The essence of fashionability.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

I HAVE been brooding a lot lately on what I have come to think of as the Two-Café Problem. The form is borrowed from the old Three-Body Problem, which perplexed mathematicians late into the nineteenth century, and which, as I vaguely understand it, involved calculating the weird swerves and dodges that three planets worked on each other when the force of gravity was working on them all. My problem looks simpler, because all it involves is the interaction of a couple of places in Paris where you can eat omelettes and drink coffee. It's still pretty tricky, though, because what fills in for gravity is the force of fashion—arbitrary, or arbitrary-seeming, taste—which in Paris is powerful enough to turn planets from their orbits and make every apple fall upward.

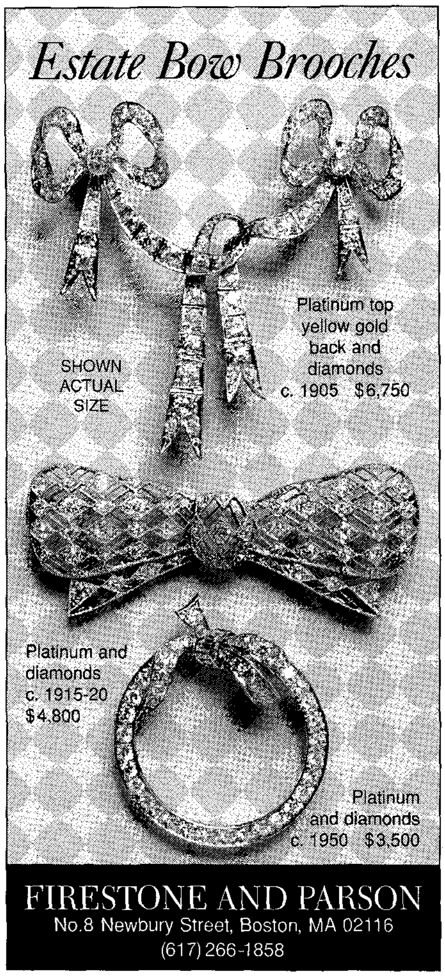


The Café de Flore: History keeps wiping the table clean.

GERARD NICOLAS

I began to brood not long ago, on a beautiful Saturday in October, when I arranged to meet my friend Nicole Wisniak at the Café de Flore, on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, for lunch. Nicole is the editor, publisher, advertising-account manager, and art director of the magazine *Égoiste*, and is a woman of such original chic that in her presence I feel even more ingenuous and American than I usually do, as though pinned to the back of my jacket were a particularly embarrassing American license plate: "Pennsylvania: The Keystone State" or "Explore Minnesota: 10,000 Lakes."

When we got to the Flore and looked around, upstairs and down, we couldn't find an empty table—that kind of Saturday—so we went outside and thought about where to go. I looked, a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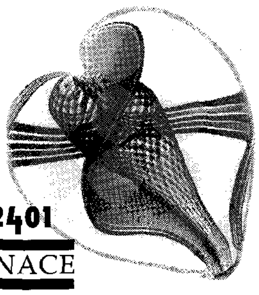

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little longingly, at the Café aux Deux Magots, just down the street, on the Place Saint-Germain-des-Prés. The two cafés are separated only by the tiny, narrow Rue Saint-Benoît. I turned to Nicole. “Why don't we just go in there?” I said.

A smile passed across Nicole's face—one of slight squeamishness mixed with incapacity. “I don't know,” she said, at a loss for the usual epigrammatic summary of the situation. “We used to go there, I think . . . twenty years ago . . .” Her voice trailed off, and again she got a funny smile on her face. She couldn't say why, but she knew that it was impossible.

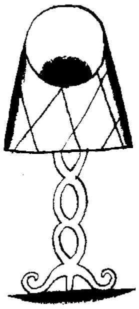
A taboo as real as any that Malinowski studied among the Trobriand Islanders kept us out, though why it existed and how it kept its spell I had no idea. Still, one of the things you learn if you live as a curious observer (or as an observed curiosity) on the fringes of the fashionable world in Paris is that the Flore remains the most fashionable place in Paris, while the Deux Magots was long ago abandoned by people who think of themselves as belonging to the world, to *ce pays-ci*—this country here, as the inhabitants of Versailles called *their* little fashionable island. Somehow, at some point, in a past that was right around the corner but—to Nicole, at least—was irretrievable, something had happened to make the Café de Flore the most fashionable place in Paris and the Deux Magots the least.

In Paris, explanations come in a predictable sequence, no matter what is being explained. First comes the explanation in terms of the unique, romantic individual, then the explanation in terms of ideological absolutes, and then the explanation in terms of the futility of all explanation. So, for instance, if your clothes dryer breaks down and you want to get the people from BHV—the strange Sears, Roebuck of Paris—to come and fix it, you will be told, first, that only one man knows how it works and he cannot be found (explanation in terms of the gifts of the romanticized individual); next, that it cannot be fixed for a week, because of a store policy (explanation in terms of ideological necessity); and, finally, that you are perfectly right to find all this exasperating, but nothing can be done, because it is in the nature of things for a dryer to break down, dryers are like that (futility of explanation itself). “They are sensitive machines, they are ill-suited to the task, no one has ever made one successfully,” the store bureaucrat in charge of service says, sighing. “*C'est normal.*” And what works small works big, too. The same sequence that explains the broken dryer also governs the explanations of the French Revolution which have been offered by the major French historians. “Voltaire did all this!” was de La Villette's explanation (only one workman); an inevitable fight between the bourgeoisie and the aristocrats, the Marxists said (store policy); until, finally, Foucault announced that there is nothing really worth explaining in the coming of the Reign of Terror, since everything in Western culture, seen properly, is a reign of terror (all dryers are like that).

“It's a good question,” a friend who has been a figure in the French media since the forties, and who eats lunch at the Flore every day, told me when I quizzed him about why, and when, exactly, and how the Flore had outstripped the Deux Magots. We were sitting, as it happened, at the Flore, eating good, wildly overpriced omelettes. The downstairs room was as pleasantly red and melancholy as it always is, with its square, rather than round, tables, which give the impression that all the tables are corner tables.

In the week or so since my first inquiry, I had been doing some reading. The Deux Magots and the Flore had, I knew, existed beside each other for more than a century. The Flore had long had a white marquee with green lettering, the Deux Magots a green marquee with gilt lettering. The interior of the Flore had always been decorated in red leather—what the French call moleskin—and the Deux Magots in brown. But I had only just learned that, like so many timeless things in Paris, they got timeless right after the horror of the Franco-Prussian War. Although there had always been a church at Saint-Germain, the topography of the Place Saint-Germain—the square itself—dates back only to the eighteen-seventies.

The Deux Magots is the modest inheritor of a silk-lingerie store of that name which stood on the spot for decades, until the eighteen-sixties, when the growth of the big department stores across the river drove it out of business. The owners eventually rented out the space to a *café liquoriste*, who kept the name and started serving coffee. No one knows exactly when the two famous statues of Chinese mandarins—the Deux Magots—were installed; Anatole France, in his memoirs, written at the turn of the century, speaks of a big picture of three *magots* that used to hang in the lingerie store. The Flore, on the other hand, has no prehistory; founded in 1870, it was always a café, and was called the Flore because of a statue of the goddess Flora that used to stand outside. Then, in 1880, Léonard Lipp, an Alsatian who had fled the German occupation of his province, opened a *brasserie* across the street, and the basic topography of the new square was in place.



For many years, the Deux Magots was the more famous and fashionable of the two cafés. It was there that Oscar Wilde went to drink after he left England; he died about five blocks away. And it was there that Joyce went to drink Swiss white wine, with everybody except Hemingway, with whom he drank dry sherry, because Hemingway wasn't everybody. (That's how Hemingway tells it, anyway.) The presence of so much history ought to be unmanning, or even just embarrassing. In Paris, it isn't, not because the past is so hallowed but because it doesn't seem to be there. The unsentimental efficiency of French commonplace civilization, of which the French café is the highest embodiment, is so brisk that it disarms nostalgia. History keeps wiping the table off and asking you, a little impatiently, what you'll have now.

Not until the nineteen-forties—I had learned a lot of this in the course of reading Olivier Todd's excellent new biography of Camus, one of the big books here this year—did the triangle of the two cafés and the Brasserie Lipp at Saint-Germain-des-Prés become legendary. This was when the group of *résistants* came into being, and a culture to go with them—when Camus and Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, as the cliché has it, brooded in one corner of the Deux Magots while Juliette Greco sang sad songs in another. The odd thing is that the cliché is almost entirely true. It was at the Deux Magots, for instance, that Sartre saw his famous philosophical *garçon*, of whom he wrote, "His movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly, his eyes express an interest too solicitous for the order of the customer." (I still get waiters like that.)

Yet, fifty years after the classic period, one café is more fashionable than ever and the other is not fashionable at all. You might not see this at once. At the Flore, the fashionable people are spread out among the tables rather than concentrated in one spot or area; they occupy the place clandestinely, following the law of Inverse Natural Appeal. The *terrasse* of the Flore, even on a sunny and perfect day (*especially* on a sunny and perfect day), is off limits; the inner room, with its red moleskin banquettes, is acceptable; but by far the most O.K. place to sit is upstairs (I was sitting there now, with my friend), and the banquettes are made of an ugly tan leatherette. (The law of Inverse Natural Appeal is at work: the outlawed *terrasse* is, as it happens, an extraordinarily pleasant place to sit; the inner room is a very pleasant place to sit; and the upstairs room is reminiscent of the cocktail lounge of a Howard Johnson's.)

The sounds of the higher French conversation, with its lovely murmur of certainties and, rising from the banquettes, the favorite words of fashionable French people, resonated all around. *Perversité*, which means "perversity" but is used as a word of praise, suggests something—a book, a dish, a politician—that is aristocratic. *C'est normal*, which means something like "No problem," and can also refer to any political or literary situation, is different from the American phrase in that its emphasis is not on a difficulty surmounted or evaded but on the return to a familiar, homeostatic atmosphere of comfort: something that happens may seem unusual (say, the revelation that a former Defense Minister might have been an East-bloc agent) but, properly understood, is not shocking at all—it's *normal*, even if a little deplorable. And from table after table, like the sound of a tolling bell, rises

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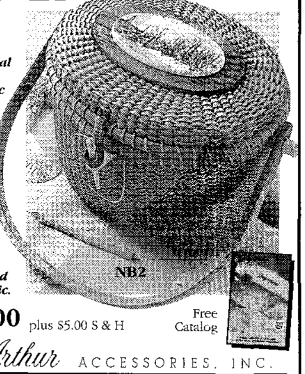

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the connective *donc*, which just means "so," or "therefore," but, when used in literary and worldly conversation, and rung with sufficient force, means "It must therefore follow as the night the day," and always sounds to me as conclusive as Gideon's trumpet.

"But it all has to do with the character of two men, Boubal and Cazes," my friend said. Paul Boubal was the owner of the Flore from 1939 to 1983—he died five years later—and Roger Cazes was the owner not of the Deux Magots but of the Brasserie Lipp, across the street. "That is to say, both Cazes and Boubal were from the Auvergne—they were countrymen—and, though each thought the other was running a sneaky business, each respected the other and frequented the other's place. This produced, in the fifties, a natural compact, a kind of family feeling between the two places. I mean family feeling in the real sense—of dependence and suspicion and resentment. The owner of the Deux Magots was a much more timid fellow. He was left out of the compact." So the real force working was that of the Lipp: it was the third planet, perturbing the orbits of the two others.

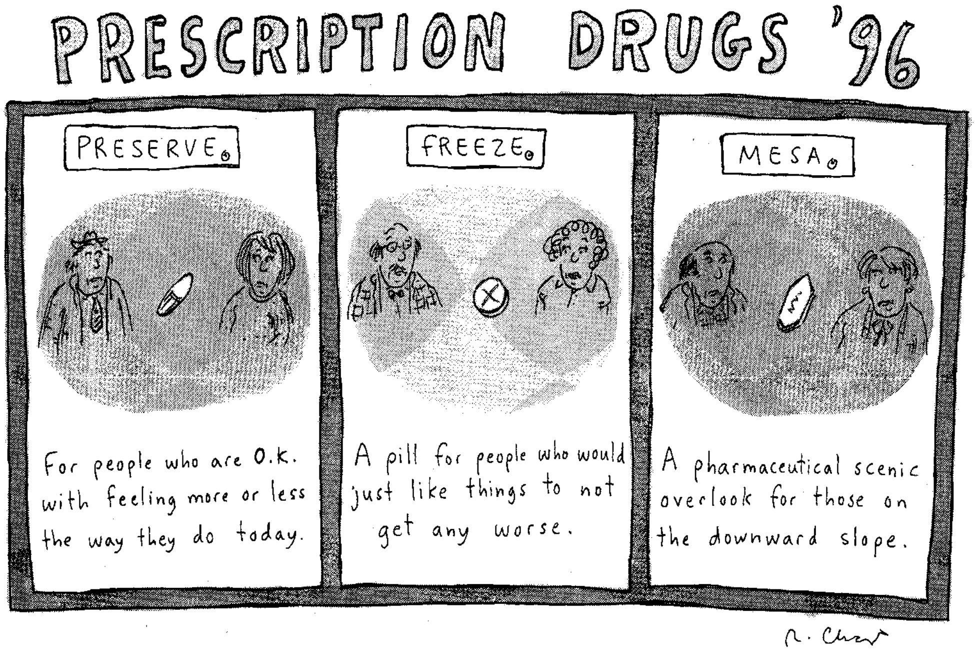
There it was, the explanation in terms of the romantic individual in almost perfect form, along with the bonus of a touch of *terroir*, the French affection for a bit of native land. Then someone suggested that I speak to the essayist and editor Jean-Paul Enthoven, who is the author of the season's most winning collection of literary essays, "Les Enfants de Saturne." Enthoven, I was told, would be sure to have an explanation; he could explain anything Parisian.

"Here is my hypothesis," he announced when I reached him on the phone at his office, at the publishing house of Grasset. "You must go back to the twenties and thirties, when the Flore became identified with the extreme right and the Deux Magots, by default, with the left. Charles Maurras, the founder of Action Française, used the Flore as his home base." Maurras was simultaneously one of the most important stylists in French literature—a member of the French Academy, and a crucial influence on T. S. Eliot, among other modernists—and a right-wing anti-Semite. "Before it was anyone else's place, it was Maurras's. His most famous polemic was even named after the café—'Au Signe de Flore.' Maurras was a malevolent force, in that everything he touched was simultaneously disgraced and hallowed."

Enthoven went on to say, "This meant that by the time of the Occupation, when Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir came to Saint-Germain and began their *résistance*, they had to avoid the Flore like a plague, since it had been contaminated by Maurras. But then the tourists began to crowd into the Deux Magots in order to look at Sartre and de Beauvoir. The place became overcrowded, and eventually the intellectuals noticed the emptiness of the Flore next door. By then Maurras was gone, the Occupation had passed, and, confronted with a choice between the pollution of Maurras and the pollution of tourism, the intellectuals chose to remake the emptiness rather than abide with the many. So they went across the street and have never returned." He stopped for a second, as if readying himself for an aphorism, and then said, "The Deux Magots was sacralized by Sartre, desacralized by the tourists, and then left vacant by history." 1870, 1940, I thought. Like so many lovely things in Paris, the two cafés were given shape by the first German invasion and then in one way or another were deformed by the second.

It was left to another, more dour friend to supply the futility-of-explanation explanation, over coffee at a lesser, more despairing café—neither fashionable nor unfashionable, just a place where you go to talk. "There is nothing to explain here," he said. "The explanation is a simple, Saussurean one." He was referring, I realized after a moment, to the father of modern linguistics, who was the first to point out that signs get their meanings not by being like the things they stand for but by being different from other signs: a sign for black means black because it isn't like the sign for white.

"The fashionable exists only in relation to something that is *not* that way," he went on. "The relationship between the modishness of the Flore and the unmodishness of the Deux Magots isn't just possibly arbitrary. It's *necessarily* arbitrary. If you place *any* two things side by side, one will become fashionable and the other will not. It's a necessity determined by the entire idea of fashion. A world in which everything is fashionable is impossible to imagine, because it implies that there would be nothing to provide a contrast. The reason that, when you place any two things side by side, one becomes chic and the other does not is that it's in the nature of desire to choose, and to choose *absolutely*. That's the mythological lesson of the great choice among the beauties: they are all beautiful—they are goddesses—and yet a man must choose. And what was the chooser's name? Paris. *C'est normal.*" ♦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A NEW KIND OF CONTAGION

How many people may die of mad-cow disease? It depends on how strong the barrier between the species proves to be—and on whether a radical theory of infection holds true.

BY JOHN LANCHESTER

I—THE WORRIED COW

AT an early point in my dealings with Richard Sibley, an energetic and articulate forty-two-year-old English veterinary surgeon, I made the mistake of using the phrase "mad-cow disease."

"That word is an absolute misnomer," he said, his gray eyes glinting. "These cows are not mad. If you want an easy name, I would prefer to call it worried-cow disease, or anxious-cow disease. The standard shot of this poor cow is all wrong." He was referring to a now famous video clip of a visibly distressed black-and-white animal—named, it turns out, Daisy—staggering around a farm pen and falling to her knees. What's so upsetting about Daisy is that she *looks* so upset, as if she knows what is happening to her but can't understand it. This icon of mute suffering gets a thorough televisual airing whenever mad-cow disease—properly known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or B.S.E.—surfaces to public attention. The most recent, and most serious, of these occasions was on March 20th of this year, when the British government announced evidence of a link between B.S.E. and ten deaths from a new human brain disease.

Nobody involved in the British cattle industry is especially fond of the term "mad-cow disease," which is a horribly effective mini-slogan in itself. In most cases, the objection is based on the damage that the term has done to business. But Sibley was forbidding me to use the phrase on the ground of its factual inaccuracy. "Very few cows ever got to the stage that this thing did on the TV," Sibley declared, and he should know. His practice is based near Tiverton, in Devon. This area, with fifty inches of rain a year, is one of the wettest parts of England; it is lush, prime dairyland; and, because B.S.E. has in the main been concentrated in dairy herds, the area has had more cases of it than anywhere else in the British Isles. As a result of being in the epicenter of the B.S.E. disaster, Sibley has been intimately involved with formulating the vets' response to the disease. He co-founded the B.S.E. committee of the British Cattle Veterinary Association, a committee that has had considerable influence on government policy. Although he has a gung-ho side—"From the veterinary point of view, the eradication of B.S.E. has been a success," he assured me—the disease has in every sense struck close to home. Sibley and his family had two pet Jersey cows, Blossom and Chocolate, until, as he put it, "Blossom copped her lot with B.S.E."

"One of the attractive things about dairy farming is that these guys live with these cows day in, day out," Sibley said. We were standing in a cowpen, visiting a farm in Venny Tedburn. Sibley was checking cows that had recently given birth for signs of postpartum infection. "They're milking them twice a day, sometimes three times a day, and they come to know their animals very well. Some of the time, I come to know them well, too." As we spoke, he had one arm inserted as far as the elbow inside a cow's vagina.

"They're very nice creatures to work with," Sibley went on. "You very rarely get a nasty cow. They do what they're told, they turn up twice a day and volunteer to come in. As long as you feed them, give them a dry bed, and look after them, they're very obliging animals. What farmers first noticed about B.S.E., and what they often found quite upsetting about it, was that the character of the animal changes. In fact, the symptoms of B.S.E. vary according to what the original nature of the animal was. The mad cows have generally been pretty mad before they got B.S.E. If they're wild before they get it, they suffer much more exaggerated symptoms. The very quiet, subdued animals tend to show much milder early signs. The farmers all notice it. Cows are creatures of habit. They tend to come into the milking parlor in the same order each time—but these cows hang back. They don't feed quite as well. They stop ruminating, they stop cudding, and that leads to digestive upsets. They lose condition, and their milk production falls. All those things show up before they ever show any nervousness, or madness."

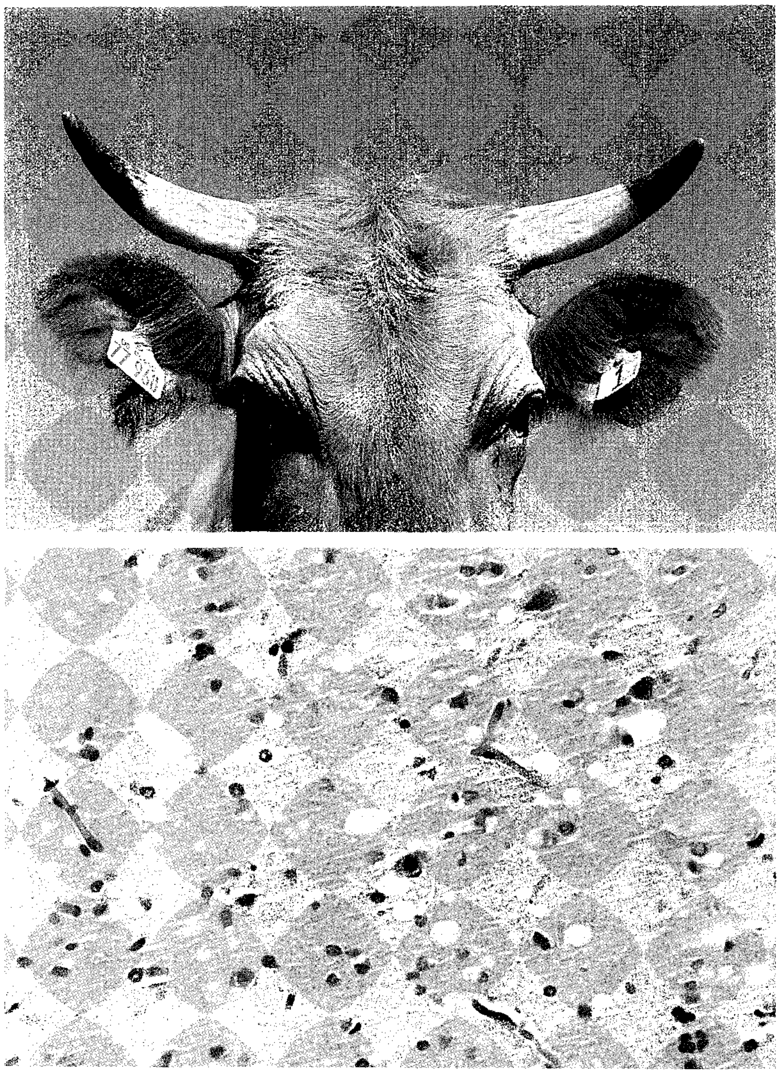
Daisy's video clip belongs to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food, or MAFF, as it is known. She is one of the very few mad cows that most people will ever see, because B.S.E. is what's called a notifiable disease. A farmer who suspects that he has a case is legally obliged to notify MAFF, which will then send a government veterinary surgeon to inspect the cow, usually on the same day. If the cow is judged to have B.S.E., it is killed on the spot with an injection of barbiturates. From this point on, the cow is the property of MAFF and of the British government. The MAFF vet arranges for the cow's head to be cut off for a postmortem; the rest of the carcass is incinerated. This has happened to a hundred and sixty-three thousand cows since B.S.E. was made a notifiable disease, on June 21, 1988.

Sibley showed me his own video of a cow whose B.S.E. he had diagnosed in July. Despite being such large and docile animals, cows have a highly expressive physiognomy. Their faces and their body language are easily read and full of character—which explains why farmers can become so fond of them—and their normal countenance when they are confronted by a human being is one of a disinterested but benign curiosity. Typically, the first symptom of B.S.E. is an appearance of anxiety.

"She looks depressed," I said as we watched his video.

"That's one way of putting it. Farmers usually say they look worried."

The cow's head was hanging, and her movements had a quality that was simultaneously jumpy and slowed down. She was frowning—her brow was furrowed—and her movements were somehow tentative; she seemed to be nervous about where to put her front feet. When another cow came up behind her, she started and looked alarmed. There was a shaking movement across her shoulders. Sibley's diagnosis of B.S.E. meant that the cow had to be destroyed.



What connects the bovine infection and the human Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease? Possibly one of the century's most important biological discoveries.

TOP: WILFRIED BAUER; BOTTOM: RALPH EAGLE, JR./PHOTORESEARCHERS

The first known case of this mysterious new cow disease was seen by Colin Whitaker, a veterinarian in Ashford, Kent, in April, 1985. Sibley saw his first case in August, 1986, in a cow that belonged to a dairy farmer named Trevor Cligg. "They laughed at me when I said, 'This cow, the expression on its face has changed,' " Cligg, a smilingly wary Devonian, told me. The initial diagnosis was magnesium deficiency, the symptoms of which are nervousness and disorientation. But the treatment had no effect. "Then we thought it was some brain tumor, or an abscess, or listeriosis, but every test we tried turned up negative," Sibley says. The cow had increasing difficulty in standing or walking and, after six months, had to be destroyed. (Cligg, whose herd numbers about a hundred cattle, eventually lost fifteen cows to B.S.E.)

This was the start of what was to become a full-blown epidemic, one in which nine hundred and three thousand British cows contracted B.S.E. At the beginning, however, there was only a steady trickle of similar cases. "There was something very odd about these cows," Sibley said. "All of us said we'd never seen this before." The affected animals rubbed parts of their bodies against walls or fences. They began to shake and tremble; their sense of balance was impaired. After about six months, they could no longer get to their feet, and at that point they were slaughtered. In November, 1986, the British government's Central Veterinary Laboratory, in Weybridge, Surrey, announced a diagnosis of the disease. Autopsies on the brains of affected cattle showed holes and lesions characteristic of a kind of disease called spongiform encephalopathy—in plain English, spongy-brain disease. A year later, on October 31, 1987, the *Veterinary Record* published the first account of the malady. By the end of 1987, there had been four hundred and twenty confirmed cases of B.S.E.

B.S.E. had now been identified as one of a family of diseases called transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, or T.S.E.s ("transmissible" because they can be transmitted from one animal to another; "spongiform" because autopsy shows that the victim's brain has spongelike holes all through it; and "encephalopathy" because they affect the brain, the encephalon). The best-known human disease in this family is Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (C.J.D.), which was first diagnosed in 1920, and which affects roughly one person in a million. Other species have their own T.S.E.s: mink suffer from transmissible mink encephalopathy; deer from chronic wasting disease of deer. All are characterized by progressively severe psychomotor dysfunction. These diseases have some other disturbing characteristics: they are undetectable before they develop, cannot be alleviated or treated in any way, and are invariably fatal. In addition, it had been known for decades that some T.S.E.s have the ability to cross over from one species to another. And because we could now be reasonably sure that B.S.E.-infected cattle were being killed and eaten—were getting into the human food supply—there was prima-facie cause for concern. The fear was that infected beef might cause a similar illness in humans—specifically, that it might cause an epidemic of a human T.S.E.

This was a possibility that the government—that is, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food—was loath to acknowledge. MAFF is, awkwardly enough, responsible for both sides of the food industry, which is to say that it is expected to show equal concern for producers and consumers. This it is widely seen as failing to do. The British cattle industry is worth four billion pounds a year and employs a hundred and thirty-six thousand people; in its handling of the B.S.E. crisis, MAFF has appeared to regard those facts as paramount. The ministry's official line, from the discovery of B.S.E. until March 20th of this year, was that there was no immediate cause for alarm. It argued that the probable source of the B.S.E. outbreak was a spongiform brain disease called scrapie, which is found in sheep; and though scrapie had been known about for more than two hundred years, no human being had ever come down with it. In the ministry's view, scrapie had possibly crossed over into the cattle population. The official formulation of this view came from a committee chaired by one Sir Richard Southwood. "From present evidence," the Southwood report declared in February, 1989, "it is likely that cattle will prove to be a 'dead-end host' for the disease agent and most unlikely that B.S.E. will have any implications for human health."

Soon after the first cases of B.S.E. were identified, MAFF was confident that it knew where B.S.E. had come from: its epidemiology showed a link with animal-feed suppliers who used a product derived from the rendering industry—"rendering" being what happens to a cow after it has been slaughtered and cut up for meat. The sequence of events is this. When a beef animal is about two years old, or a dairy cow is around six years old, it is sent to a slaughterhouse. (About forty per cent of the meat products in Britain are provided by the dairy herd—cows that have come to the end of their useful, milk-producing life.) The animal is killed with a shot to the head from a gun with a captive bolt; then it is hoisted up from the ground, and its throat is cut. The animal then moves down a disassembly line, where it is "dressed": first skinned, then decapitated, then gutted, then cut in half down the backbone by a power saw. At this point, there is a pause of up to thirty-six hours, since the carcass needs to spend enough time in a cooler to reduce its temperature to below 45° F. before it can be further cut up to provide edible joints of meat. Now the carcass is addressed with various saws and knives to produce the cuts of meat which stock supermarket displays, like steaks, ribs, and offal (as variety meats are called in England). And then there is an unlovely thing called "mechanically recovered meat"—the last edible fragments of the carcass, which are extracted by a high-powered water spray and contain soft tissue and bone fragments. "Unfortunately," Sibley says, "the B.S.E. story has uncovered some pretty dodgy practices within the beef industry—like sticking these bits and pieces through a machine, churning it up, producing some sort of gray slurry which then got colored and reformulated and was legally called meat." It is this mechanically recovered meat that is believed to have contained some of the most infective parts of the animal—especially the spinal cord.

The very last, unsalable remants of the animal then go to the rendering plant, where they are treated with high-temperature cooking to convert them into something that somebody will want to buy. "One thing the B.S.E. publicity has brought about is the amazing diversity of product which has got beef in it," Sibley points out. "You eat your Imperial mint thinking, 'Yeah, I'm a vegetarian,' but in fact it's packed full of gelatine, which is a beef-derived product. People have had nasty surprises—they didn't realize what they were eating a lot of the time." The list of beef by-products produced in rendering is extraordinary: besides gelatine, which is used in candies, mayonnaise, lipstick, and ice cream, it includes collagen (used in sausage casings and glue), tallow and fat (in soap, deodorant, detergent, linoleum, insecticide, margarine), and keratin (in shampoo).

One other main by-product of the rendering process is something called meat-and-bone meal, or M.B.M., which consists of the cooked and ground-up remains of processed carcasses—often those of cows but also of sheep, chicken, and other livestock. Feed mills buy the meal and make it into a crunchy, toasted, breakfast-cereal-like substance, usually shaped like nuggets or pencils. It was this feed that proved to be the source of the B.S.E. epidemic.

To a layman, there is something disturbing about the use of M.B.M.—after all, what was happening here was that cows were being fed other cows, in a processed-food version of cannibalism. But when you talk to farmers you soon realize that before the B.S.E. outbreak almost every country, including the United States, used M.B.M. to feed cattle, and that it had been used in Britain since before the Second World War. At the same time, most farmers won't admit that they knew what was in the stuff. "If these bags of food had written on them, 'This product contains mashed-up cow brains,' nobody would have touched it," Sibley says. "Instead, it had written on it, 'Protein content twenty-two per cent.' "

Given that meat-and-bone meal is used all over the world, though, its employment in the U.K. cattle industry doesn't explain why the B.S.E. epidemic struck in Britain. The reason seems to lie in a change that was introduced in the British rendering industry during the seventies and early eighties. Rendering plants stopped treating their animal matter with chemical solvents, which had been used to increase the yield of tallow and fat but were (ironically enough) considered unsafe for the rendering-plant workforce. The disease came from something that was being processed through the rendering plants—either sheep infected with scrapie (of which Britain has long had a relatively high incidence) or some hitherto unknown cow disease, which was recycled through the feed and fed back to other cows. The rendering process was expected to kill any infectious agent, but if it didn't it was unimprovable as a way of creating an epidemic. "The theory of B.S.E. spread could easily mean that there was just one original B.S.E. victim," Sibley says. "If you think of the infective dose—less than one gram of infected material—a cow brain weighing perhaps a kilogram has the potential to infect a thousand other animals. And then, of course, you get massive distribution when all those infected cows are fed back through the rendering system in turn." The math is easy: if a rendered cow gives the disease to a thousand other cows, which then are rendered and give the disease to a thousand more cows each, within two generations we have a potential host population of a million B.S.E.-infected cows.

The bad news about meat-and-bone-meal feed was known by the summer of 1988. On July 18th of that year, the use of M.B.M. in ruminant feed was banned in Britain. And that, from the government's point of view, should have been that. By now, the ministry was convinced that they knew where B.S.E. came from (namely, M.B.M.) and how to stop its spread (by keeping M.B.M. out of cattle feed); when the Southwood report announced, in February, 1989, that cattle were likely to be a "dead-end host" for the infectious agent—well, just how much good news can you take?

This comforting account of B.S.E., however, caused some rumbles of dissent.

"Before we get down to cases, I trust no one is wearing a wire?"

The government-appointed Southwood committee mysteriously included no experts on spongiform encephalopathies. The quality of the committee's conclusions, which formed the basis of government policy, may be judged by their prediction that the cumulative total of infected cows would be from seventeen thousand to twenty thousand cases. That, we now know, was wrong by the impressive margin of 4,515 per cent.

To critics, the view that the disease was unlikely to cross over into other species was premature and potentially dangerous, since it had long been known that T.S.E.s can change their range of possible hosts when they are passaged through species. (The critics had cause for concern: B.S.E., unlike scrapie, is extraordinarily transmissible, and has so far been successfully given to pig, sheep, goat, mouse, nyala, kudu, gemsbok, Arabian oryx, eland, puma, cheetah, scimitar-horned oryx, ocelot, macaw, marmoset, and macaque monkey.) This could have grave implications for human health, since at this stage infected beef was passing freely into the human food supply—the ideal conditions to create a human epidemic, if B.S.E. turned out to be transmissible from cows to people. Acknowledging this as a theoretical possibility, the Southwood report called for measures to exclude "known affected cattle"—i.e., visibly sick cows—from the human food supply, but at the same time it concluded that "the risk of transmission of B.S.E. to humans appears remote." In its attempt to downplay that possibility, the Southwood report seemed unreassuringly eager to reassure—a sign to many that it had been co-opted by the culture of MAFF.

To quiet worries of this kind, on November 13, 1989, the government went beyond the recommendations of the Southwood report and passed a law requiring that the most infective parts of cows—"specified bovine offal," including the brain, spinal cord, spleen, thymus, intestines, and tonsils—be removed from the human food supply. And with that the government seems to have considered the problem solved. Between 1988 and 1991, it spent a paltry three million pounds on B.S.E. research.

The task, as far as MAFF was concerned, was not to insure that British beef was safe—they thought they had done that—but to convince consumers to eat more of it. Abroad, this was an uphill struggle: by 1990, fifteen countries, including the United States, had banned the import of British beef. Domestically, many schools and education authorities were forbidding the use of beef. Meanwhile, since the illness had a five-year incubation period, the number of cows identified as having the disease kept going up: 7,137 cases in 1989; 14,181 in 1990; 25,032 in 1991. But the official line remained that B.S.E. posed no concrete risk to human health. In 1995, Prime Minister John Major declared, "There is currently no scientific evidence that B.S.E. can be transmitted to humans, or that eating beef causes C.J.D. in humans. That issue is not in question." To understand why that degree of certainty was inappropriate, we need to look at what kind of disease B.S.E. is. And this is where the story becomes truly strange.

II—THE LAUGHING DEATH

NEW GUINEA has a remarkably hostile terrain. The center of the fifteen-hundred-mile-long island is dominated by a series of knife-ridged mountain ranges; all around the coast are malarial swamps; the interior is covered in kunai grass, whose four-to-six-foot-high blades can draw blood at a touch. Jared Diamond, a physiologist and ecologist at U.C.L.A., who has travelled on the island, writes:

> On my 1983 expedition into the Kumawa Mountains, it took me and a team of twelve New Guineans two weeks to penetrate seven miles inland. Yet we had it easy compared to the British Ornithologists' Union Jubilee Expedition. On 4 January 1910 they landed on New Guinea's coast and set off for the snow-capped mountains that they could see only a hundred miles inland. On 12 February 1911 they finally gave up and turned back, having covered less than half the distance (forty-five miles) in those thirteen months.

During the nineteen-thirties, a series of expeditions into the highlands discovered thriving Stone Age tribes living in mountain valleys in the interior of the island. In 1932, a gold prospector named Ted Eubanks encountered a Stone Age tribe called the Fore, about thirty thousand in number, who lived between three thousand and eight thousand feet up the side of a twelve-thousand-three-hundred-foot mountain.

In 1952, when the eastern half of the island, which is now Papua New Guinea, was still being administered by Australia, an Australian patrol officer reported the outbreak of a curious disease among the

Fore. The illness began with an unsteadiness when walking and a difficulty in controlling the limbs; then the victim developed a general tremor—a shaking and shivering not unlike that of malaria. After a month or so, the victim would be unable to stand or walk. Mental processes deteriorated along a similar trajectory: speech became slurred and then unintelligible; emotions became inappropriate, violent, and uncontrollable; facial expression became fixed and rictuslike. Everybody who got the disease died, usually of pneumonia, and usually within several months. Between 1957 and 1975, the disease killed more than twenty-five hundred members of the Fore; at the height of the epidemic, the tribe lost about one per cent of its population to the illness every year. The first outsiders to witness sufferers of the disease gave it the name "kuru," which is a Fore word that means to shake or shiver or be afraid. The Fore themselves referred to it as the laughing death.

The first scientific account of kuru was published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in 1957. Two intrepid doctors who had studied the Fore, D. Carleton Gajdusek and Vincent Zigas, described the disease and pointed out some of its unusual features, one of which was that kuru affected mainly women and children; under five per cent of its victims were adult men. The only postmortem abnormality apparent in the victims was that they had holes and lesions in their brains. "Governmental control of this region has existed for five years or less and before that cannibalism, interclan warfare, and ritual killings—remnants of all these still survive—were prominent features of Fore culture," the doctors noted, and the significance of these customs was soon made clear.

Gajdusek and Zigas discovered that the disease was spread by the Fore's cannibalism—specifically, by their ritual of handling and eating the brains of freshly deceased relatives. Women contracted the disease by eating the brains, children by smearing the brains over themselves. (Men seem to have preferred muscle tissue.) Kuru gradually died out among the Fore following the abandonment of cannibalism, beginning in 1957—although, because kuru has a remarkably long incubation period, and perhaps also because of some anthropophagous recidivism, by the late nineteen-seventies the disease was still killing forty people a year. It continues to claim victims today.

The crucial move in Dr. Gajdusek's research, for which he was awarded the 1976 Nobel Prize in Medicine, was the demonstration that kuru was an infectious disease. In 1965, chimpanzees that had been injected with infected brain tissue came down with kuru. The discovery had a considerable scientific impact: since there are a number of diseases similar to kuru, the fact that kuru was infectious meant that those diseases, too, would probably turn out to be infectious. And so it proved. These diseases are the T.S.E.s.

The discovery and explanation of kuru caused scientists to turn to one T.S.E. in particular. This was the sheep disease scrapie, which has been a subject of on-and-off scientific attention since its first clinical description, in Britain, in 1732. The name refers to the way infected sheep often rub against trees, fences, or walls, apparently to alleviate an unbearable itching sensation; the afflicted sheep also tend to suffer from uncontrollable trembling—hence the French name for the illness, *la tremblante*. Scrapie occurs in every sheep-rearing country in the world except Australia and New Zealand. The disease, however, has some other features that, when seen in conjunction with Carleton Gajdusek's news about the way kuru worked, started to make biologists ask new questions.

Once kuru was identified as an infectious disease, the initial assumption was that the pathogen was some sort of virus; indeed, the 1977 paper in which Gajdusek described his Nobel-winning work was entitled "Unconventional Viruses and the Origin and Disappearance of Kuru." ("Disappearance" was a bit premature, given that forty-odd people were still succumbing to the disease each year.) Admittedly, kuru could be no ordinary virus: for one thing, viruses generally have an incubation period of days, whereas kuru

"So—who are you angry at currently?"

took years, or even decades, to develop. Yet, with other microbial agents having been ruled out, there seemed no other explanation of the nature of the disease.

If kuru and scrapie were related diseases, however, the assumption that the infectious agent was a virus raised as many questions as it answered. For one thing, whatever it was that gave sheep scrapie was already known to be extraordinarily robust. You could do things to it that you couldn't do to normal viruses—a fact that was made clear in Scotland during the late nineteen-thirties, when eighteen thousand sheep were inoculated against louping ill (an inflammatory illness of the brain, spread by ticks). The inoculatory agent had been treated with a powerful disinfectant called formalin, but that wasn't enough to kill whatever caused scrapie, which was accidentally present in it, and fifteen hundred of the inoculated sheep subsequently came down with the disease. Other experiments showed that scrapie could survive a process called autoclaving, or cooking under very high pressure and at very high temperatures—conditions that should have destroyed any normal virus. (Similarly, we now know that the infective agent for B.S.E. survives rendering, which subjects it for extended periods to high temperatures.) It survived doses of radiation and of ultraviolet light such as no virus had ever withstood. Then, too, all known viruses produce an antibody response: our body starts to fight the intruding DNA and leaves evidence that it has been doing so; the H.I.V. virus, for instance, was tracked down via the antibody that fought it off. Yet no antibody response to a T.S.E. has ever been detected. So the suspicion grew that scrapie—and, by analogy, the infectious agent for the other T.S.E.s—was something new. Maybe it was a kind of weird supervirus; for a while, a theory about something called a "slow virus" was bandied about. Or maybe it was—well, something else.

III—THE PRION PERPLEX

On April 9, 1982, the leading American scientific journal, *Science*, published a paper by Stanley B. Prusiner, a neurologist and biochemist based at the University of California, San Francisco. Prusiner's article was entitled "Novel Proteinaceous Infectious Particles Cause Scrapie," and it advanced a shockingly radical theory about the origin of the disease. Prusiner and his co-workers adduced evidence from a range of sources (principally, attempts to purify and isolate the infectious agent for scrapie) to argue that scrapie was indeed caused by something else—an infectious agent unlike any virus, or, indeed, any known form of life:

> Because the dominant characteristics of the scrapie agent resemble those of a protein, an acronym is introduced to emphasize this feature. In place of such terms as "unconventional virus" or "unusual slow virus-like agent," the term prion (pronounced *pree-on*) is suggested. Prions are small *pro*teinaceous *in*fectious particles which are resistant to inactivation by most procedures that modify nucleic acids.

According to the authors, the evidence supported the hypothesis that the "prion" contained no nucleic acid. It was simply a particle of protein that had mastered the knack of reproducing itself. This theory, the authors concluded, "is consistent with the experimental data but is clearly heretical." This was because, if the model proposed by Prusiner and his colleagues was correct, prions were the only organic, self-replicating thing on the planet not to contain any DNA or RNA; and that would mean that the prion was effectively a whole new kind of contagion.

The prion theory—which is the sort of thing that wins Nobel Prizes once it is generally accepted—has been refined by subsequent research and hypothesizing. It now goes something like this. We know that our bodies contain a protein called PrP, used in nerve cells; and we know that, in victims of T.S.E.s, millions of particles of PrP have joined together to form agglomerations, known as plaques, in the brain. The PrP that makes up these plaques seems to be chemically identical to the protein we all have within us, but something about it has clearly gone wrong, and it behaves differently in response to a procedure called a protease test. All this we know. The theory is that the lethal form of PrP—now known, following Prusiner's suggestion, as the prion—is a kind of evil twin. It is the same protein folded into a different shape, and it has the ability to make copies of itself. The prion attaches itself to a healthy particle of PrP and, through a sinister molecular origami, refolds it, and turns it into another prion. The new prion then attaches itself to another healthy PrP, refolds it into another prion, and so on. The end results are the cerebral agglomerations of protein, and hence the lesions, and hence the symptoms, found in all the T.S.E.s.

The prion theory of infection posits both a highly complex process (so complex that we don't have a model of how it actually works) and a very simple one, because the infectious agent is much, much more primitive than the hitherto most stripped-down living entity, the virus. If a normal living creature (goldfish, wasp, human being) contains as much genetic information as a book, and a typical virus contains as much information as a few reasonably complex sentences, a prion contains as much as a single letter.

The prion theory explains a lot that was baffling about these transmissible brain diseases—prion diseases, as many scientists have taken to calling them. It explains why the infectious agent is invisible—undetectable by electron microscopes that are capable of spotting the tiniest viruses. It explains why the infectious agent is so much tougher than any virus. It also accounts for the otherwise baffling multiple nature of these diseases—the fact that they can be sporadic and inherited as well as infectious. ("Sporadic" means that a disease can arise apparently at random, as if of its own accord. If you're marooned on a desert island, with no one to infect you, it's impossible for you to develop flu spontaneously, but you have at least a theoretical chance of coming down with "sporadic"—one in a million—Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.) Mad-cow disease was caused by cows ingesting rogue prions via their feed—the prions coming either from scrapie-afflicted sheep or from some as yet undetected cattle T.S.E. Then people ate the infected cows, and the rogue prions got to work on them, too. Prion diseases thus make a horrible actuality out of the old slogan "You are what you eat."

Prusiner wasn't joking when he called his theory "heretical"; if it's correct, it's one of the most important discoveries in biology this century. That said, the idea that T.S.E.s are caused by prions alone remains controversial. Some scientists think the infectious agent is a tiny chunk of nucleic acid linked with a protein to make something called a "virion" or "virino." This is similar to a virus except that it is unprecedentedly tough, unprecedentedly small, and presupposes an unprecedented relationship with the prion protein. The presence of a chunk of DNA or RNA would help explain why T.S.E.s such as scrapie appear in different strains, just as viral illnesses do, with differing but consistent pathologies and symptoms. Fans of the virino ask how the "protein only" hypothesis can explain that: Surely there can't be several different kinds of magically refolding protein? But this theory, too, is highly controversial. In short, almost everybody is sure that prions are essentially involved in T.S.E.s, but nobody is yet certain exactly how.

IV—A WAKE IN BELFAST

AT three o'clock in the afternoon on March 20th of this year, Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, announced in the House of Commons that ten cases of a new form of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease had been confirmed in Britain and that the likeliest cause of this "new variant" was exposure to B.S.E. In other words, notwithstanding a decade's worth of government pronouncements about how safe British beef was, it now looked as if people had contracted mad-cow disease from eating mad cows. Dorrell's statement was terse, and was none the more reassuring for that. At about the same time, the government's Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC), the body of scientists charged with deciding what to do about prion diseases, gave a press conference. The members of SEAC explained the scientific basis for Dorrell's announcement: new-variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, as it was dubbed, had a distinctive pathology (the infected brains looked different from brains with old-style C.J.D.); it had different symptoms (starting with behavioral and psychiatric disturbances and the early onset of ataxia, which is difficulty in movement and balance); it lasted longer than the classic form of the disease; and its victims were much younger. The mean age for onset of classic C.J.D. is sixty-five, and the illness is exceptionally rare in people below the age of forty. Of the ten new cases, however, three were teen-agers, five were in their twenties, and the oldest was thirty-nine. (In the light of all these differences, the designation "new-variant C.J.D." is surely a misnomer, since it seems to be a separate disease; indeed, its closest resemblance, in both symptoms and pathology, is to kuru.) The advisory committee made it clear that the full extent of the disease was not known and

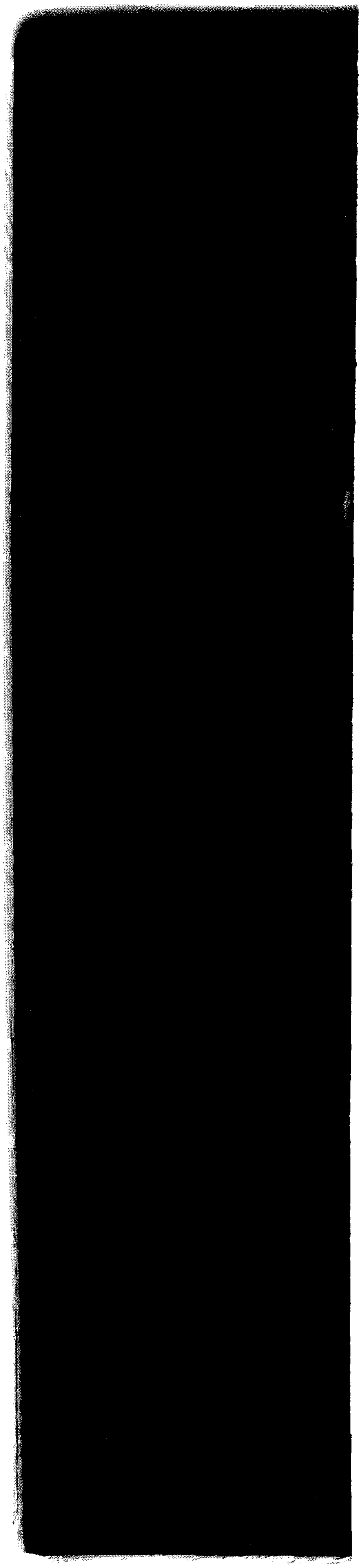
ONSTAGE

ROSEMARY AND IRA

ON December 6th, Rosemary Clooney will perform in a centennial birthday celebration at Carnegie Hall for that supreme lyricist Ira Gershwin. Clooney has a special affinity with the Gershwins. For ten months, in 1936 and 1937, the brothers rented her present house in Beverly Hills, staying until George's death, in July of 1937. They wrote "Love Is Here to Stay" there, and, in less than an hour, "A Foggy Day (in London Town)." Later, Ira tried to buy the house, but it was unavailable, so he bought a bungalow next door, rebuilt it, and lived there the rest of his life. (He died in 1983.) "I loved Ira very much," Clooney said last week. "He seemed very shy, an observer rather than a participant, but you could engage him in conversation, one on one. When he talked, it was often about George. If Ira's outside light was on at night, you were welcome to come in. I remember a long, wonderful argument there one night between Sid Luft, Judy Garland's husband, and Humphrey Bogart which finally ended when Luft, who kept annoying the hell out of Bogey by prefacing everything with 'Culturally speaking,' suggested that they settle this outside. Bogey laughed and said, 'Are you going to fight with an old man like me?' "

Clooney is her same down-home, funny self. Her pipes are in excellent shape, she works only as much as she wants to, and she successfully quit smoking over a year ago. She sang the Gershwins' "But Not for Me" and "Love Is Here to Stay" at a recent State Department function, and was complimented afterward by Jason Robards, the m.c. of the event, for choosing songs with an international flavor. ("But Not for Me" mentions a "Russian play," and "Love Is Here" mentions Gibraltar.) She has a Christmas album that is already on the charts, but she won't be returning to Rainbow & Stars next February. "I'm coming in May," she said. "I can't stand freezing my butt off in February in New York anymore."

—WHITNEY BALLIETT



Rosemary Clooney, photographed by Fergus Greer, Los Angeles, 1996.

"Do me a favor before you come to bed, Ted. Get dressed."

would not be known for some time. "I believe this is a new phenomenon," said Dr. Robert Will, who runs the National C.J.D. Surveillance Unit, in Edinburgh, which monitors the incidence of the disease. He added, "There is reason for major concern." In response to questions about the extent of new-variant C.J.D., Professor John Pattison, the chairman of SEAC, spoke of a possible upper limit of half a million cases—"an AIDS-like epidemic." These would be people who had contracted the disease from eating contaminated meat in the late eighties, in the days before the most infectious parts of mad cows were removed from the human food supply. The prime suspect is hamburger or mince containing mechanically recovered meat. As I write, the total number of confirmed cases of the disease is fourteen.

The March announcement about new-variant C.J.D. caused the European Union to impose a worldwide ban on the import of British beef. It led to the adoption of a cow-slaughter policy that removes all cows over the age of thirty months (well before the age at which B.S.E. symptoms begin to appear) from the human food supply: twenty-two thousand cows are being slaughtered and incinerated every week. The announcement also caused a lot of fear. One group of people, though, found some paradoxical comfort in the bad news about new-variant C.J.D.: the families of men and women who had died of the mysterious new disease. "I was in the States at the time of the announcement," said Brendan Callaghan, a thirty-nine-year-old personnel officer with Ford, whose brother Maurice died of the disease on November 4, 1995, in Belfast. "I remember thinking that this was now an admission on the part of the government that *something* had killed Maurice." At an inquest held on October 28th of this year, the Belfast coroner, John Leckey, stated that the likely cause of Maurice's death was his having eaten B.S.E.-infected beef. This was one of the first inquest verdicts to cite B.S.E. as a cause of death.

Maurice Callaghan, the youngest of six children, was brought up in West Belfast and graduated from Queen's University in 1988 with a degree in mechanical engineering. In 1991, he married Clare McKee, and the next year he went back to Queen's to work as energy manager in the estates department, which runs the university's buildings and fixtures. The first signs of Maurice's illness appeared in February, 1995.

"It just started with difficulty sleeping," Clare, a soft-voiced twenty-eight-year-old, told me. It was four days after the anniversary of Maurice's death, and we were sitting in the front room of his older brother Gerard's house, in the West Belfast suburb of Ladybrook. A black-and-white photograph of a smiling Maurice sat on a triangular trinket stand in one corner of the room. "He was very agitated, he felt dizzy, short-tempered, fatigued. He was having pains in the soles of his feet."

The initial diagnosis was stress. "He thought it was that himself," Clare said. "He was finding it hard to keep up with his work. He wasn't sleeping, so, obviously, he was feeling tired. His short-term memory was probably starting to go even then." Maurice's speech grew slurred; when he came home from work, he would immediately lie down; then he began to come home from work early. By his thirtieth-birthday party, on June 1st, it was obvious that he was genuinely unwell. "Everyone noticed and commented on it," Sally, Gerard's wife, said. Maurice couldn't react appropriately in conversation. The combination of his impaired sense of balance and his slurred speech caused others at the party to think that he was drunk.

Soon he began to have hallucinations. He woke Clare in the middle of the night demanding to know where his wife was. Another evening, she found that he had shaved and got dressed and was preparing to go to work as if it were morning. Once, during the Rugby World Cup, he became convinced that several members of the All Blacks, the New Zealand rugby team, were upstairs in the house, and insisted that Clare go check.

Perhaps mercifully, Maurice seemed to be unaware of what was happening to him. In July, he was admitted to the Royal Victoria Hospital, for the first of three times. A standard test for psychiatric patients is to ask them who the Prime Minister is. Maurice did not know—"though that may be because it's John Major," Brendan added. Maurice could not finish sentences. A battery of physical tests was conducted, to no effect. At the end of August, a neurologist, Dr. Tom Esmonde, mentioned Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease for the first time. When Clare said something about B.S.E., she told me, "he said you shouldn't mention B.S.E. and C.J.D. in the same sentence." Dr. Martin Zeidler arrived from the C.J.D. Surveillance Unit with a lengthy questionnaire.

"A lot of the questions were to do with diet," Gerard recalled. At that time, the official admission of a connection between Creutzfeldt-Jakob and B.S.E. was still seven months away. "We now realize why some of the questions were there. We didn't know then. Some of them were very, very specific. Did he ever eat tongue or cow's brain? Did he eat sheep's brain, sheep's eyeball? Had he ever been on a farm, had he ever spent holidays on a farm as a kid?"

Maurice developed an aversion to sudden movement and seemed particularly disturbed by the sight of flies. By September, he could not walk or talk. His deterioration was now visible with each passing day. He spent six weeks at home being fed, wiped, and washed. On November 1st, he went into the local hospice, and he died there three days later. The initial death certificate gave pneumonia and "premature dementia" as the cause of Maurice's death. Ten days later, Clare gave birth to their second daughter.

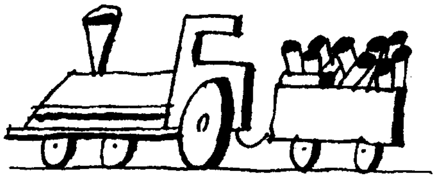
"The family wanted a normal burial for Maurice," Brendan said. "It was very important for us that in the end he would have the dignity of a decent burial and a traditional Irish wake with an open coffin, and that it would be dignified and orderly, and we could start to grieve for him." The Callaghans gave permission for the autopsy on the understanding that the funeral rituals would not be affected—in particular, that Maurice could be buried (a Catholic preference) rather than cremated, and that they could hold a wake for him. (The wake is an important Irish custom: the body of the deceased lies in his home overnight before the funeral and during those hours friends and family gather to remember him; in the morning, the last farewells are said and the coffin lid is closed.) On the day before the funeral, however, the local priest, Father Brendan Hickland, told the Callaghans that "they"—the family assumed he meant the coroner's office or the public-health department—were insisting on cremation. It took a flurry of telephone calls and reminders of previous promises before, at the end of the afternoon, the coroner called and told Brendan that the funeral could go ahead.

The undertaker who brought the body also brought instructions that children were to stay out of the room in which the body was kept, that no one was to touch the body or even the inside of the coffin. At midnight, the coffin was sealed. The next day, at Belfast City Cemetery, the Callaghans found that Maurice's grave had been dug to nearly twice the usual depth—"It was like a mineshaft," Brendan said—and heavily limed. Despite subsequent meetings with the coroner, the pathologist, and members of the C.J.D. Surveillance Unit, the family has still not been able to find out who gave the order for these actions. They did, however, learn that Maurice's brain material, which was removed at autopsy on November 5, 1995, did not reach its destination, in Edinburgh, until January, because no courier in Belfast was willing to carry it. In the end, Dr. Zeidler, of the C.J.D. Surveillance Unit, came to collect it. "It's at this point," Brendan said, "that you start to say, 'What the hell is this illness?' "

V—ONGOING EXPERIMENTS

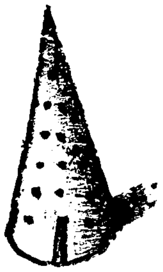
UNFORTUNATELY, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food hasn't been a good place to turn with such questions. MAFF has earned international opprobrium for its unaccommodating attitude toward B.S.E. research, an attitude that it has enforced in the most basic way: through maintaining a monopoly on B.S.E. cow tissue and epidemiological data. (Imagine if a single governmental department exercised a near-monopoly on the world's supply of experimental material for AIDS.)

From 1988 to 1996, independent researchers were denied complete access to MAFF's B.S.E. database. "There is a general principle of not wanting to give the data to anybody," one anonymous MAFF scientist told *Nature*. When Professor Roy Anderson, a population biologist at Oxford, finally did get access to the database, in late May of this year, he and his colleagues produced (within four months) a paper showing that MAFF's publicized figure for the number of notifiable B.S.E. cattle—a hundred and sixty-three thousand—understated the total number of infected cattle to the tune of seven hundred and forty thousand. MAFF did sponsor studies on mice, but other potentially crucial experiments—such as one that would measure the infective dose of various parts of the cow by injecting other cows with the relevant tissue—were never performed. Such tests would be much more sensitive to infectivity than any hitherto undertaken, and therefore much more likely to reveal bad news about, say, liver (still not banned) or muscle tissue (i.e., steak and similar cuts). These experiments have only just begun, roughly ten years too late.



It isn't hard at this point to identify the two questions that are preoccupying the British public: Is British beef safe? And, How many people are going to die of this new disease? The first is easier to answer. If the infectivity is restricted to the parts of the cow's body which are being removed and discarded (that's the "specified bovine offal," consisting of the brain, the spinal cord, and so forth), and if we can trust the abattoirs to remove that offal, then the beef is probably safe. Or, as Professor Pattison, of SEAC, told the Members of the House of Commons, "If you put all the factors together, we are dealing with a risk, in our estimation, that may well lead to no cases per year if you eat the average of twenty kilograms of beef, which is what the British diet contains. . . . It is not a zero; it is just that if everybody in the country ate the average amount of beef the risk may be so low you get zero cases." Unfortunately, that doesn't necessarily mean that British beef has always been safe. From 1985 until the offal ban, in November, 1989, infected matter was routinely passing into the human food supply. After the ban, it was passing into the human food supply only when the procedures weren't enforced; so it was less than reassuring to discover that, according to the government's 1995 research, forty-eight per cent of the time abattoirs were failing to comply with the regulations. (Of the many extraordinary elements of the B.S.E. story, the fact that for six years no decisive nationwide attempt was made to enforce the offal ban ranks pretty high.) MAFF claims to be certain that none of the infected matter went into the human food supply.

Anderson's study estimated that in all seven hundred and twenty-nine thousand infected cows were eaten by human beings. It is not clear how many infected animals may have been exported to Europe, formerly a prime market for British cattle. One of the confirmed new-variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob deaths and a second, disputed one occurred in France, and accurate figures on the French incidence of B.S.E. are hard to come by. The French, like the Germans, the Dutch, and the Irish, have a herd-slaughter policy: if a farmer reports a single cow with B.S.E., his entire herd is slaughtered. It would be hard to think of a better incentive for underreporting the disease.



For an answer to the question of how many people are going to die, we can turn to John Collinge, a professor of neurology at Imperial College, London. His research is funded by the Wellcome Trust, a charitable foundation, rather than by the government; it was no surprise that the first experimental evidence of a link between B.S.E. and human disease came from somewhere other than MAFF. Collinge is the scientist whose research was crucial to the Belfast inquest. On October 23rd, five days before the inquest, Collinge gave a press conference announcing the publication, in the British scientific journal *Nature*, of a paper entitled "Molecular Analysis of Prion Strain Variation and the Aetiology of 'New Variant' C.J.D." Collinge and his colleagues had found a molecular marker that is common to B.S.E. and the new-variant C.J.D., and is different from the markers detectable in other forms of C.J.D. This is not quite proof that the bovine disease causes the human one—unequivocal proof is unlikely unless B.S.E. is actually injected into human experimental subjects—but the paper states that "dietary exposure to specified bovine offals" is the "most likely" cause of the fourteen confirmed cases of new-variant C.J.D. One of Collinge's co-authors—Dr. James Ironside, of the National C.J.D. Surveillance Unit—testified as an expert witness at Maurice Callaghan's inquest.

John Collinge is a subdued thirty-eight-year-old, with a disconcerting resemblance to a younger Walter Matthau. He became interested in the brave new world of prion diseases in 1988. Like a good many people in the field, he is fascinated by the radical prion theory, of which he is, in his low-key way, a partisan. He is now a world leader in the field.

Collinge's molecular-analysis paper was a by-product of a series of experiments he has been running on transgenic mice. These are mice specially bred to have the human gene for manufacturing PrP; since their bodies make the protein, they are vulnerable to human prion diseases, and if you inject them with infective material from victims of old-style Creutzfeldt-Jakob they come down with the disease after about two hundred days. A separate group of transgenic mice was "challenged"—the term of art—with material from B.S.E.-infected cows. The idea is that this will eventually tell us whether B.S.E. prions have the ability to replicate using the relevant protein in people, and so whether people can contract B.S.E. Of course, since it now appears that Collinge's other research has come close to settling this point, the question switches from whether human beings can get B.S.E. (answer: almost certainly yes) to how easily they get it, after how long, and after how large a potentially infectious dose.

The good news is that the mice are still hanging on in there. "We have lost a few along the way, but the surviving mice were exposed about five hundred and fifty days ago," Collinge says. The deaths so far are attributable to nothing more sinister than natural causes: since the life expectancy of the mice is around seven hundred days, the few deaths are the equivalent of the first baby-boomer heart attacks. These results, taken in combination with other experiments, suggest that there is some "species barrier," as it is called, between human beings and B.S.E.

The species barrier is becoming an issue in the study of more than a few other diseases—it is commonly conjectured that AIDS and the Ebola virus both have their origin in animal diseases that crossed a similar divide—and it is clearly a subject about which we need to know much more. In the case of B.S.E., given that the extent of human exposure to the infectious agent might run into the tens of millions, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the question: the effectiveness of the species barrier will determine how many people are going to die. (Once a disease gets inside a species and is passed between members of that species, it is much more dangerous. Remember that a single gram—less than a twentieth of an ounce—of infective B.S.E. material given to a cow is enough to kill it. Similarly, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease can be passed between human beings by a corneal transplant, or by the use of medical instruments that have undergone all normal sterilization procedures.)

The trouble is that the transgenic mice aren't capable of giving an unequivocal answer to a number of questions we would like to ask. For one thing, in all species B.S.E. has a relatively long incubation period. What if the mice simply die of old age before they have a chance to develop the illness? For another thing, the experiment involves only fifty mice—not enough to give a positive result if, say, the disease affects only one potential victim in a thousand (which would still cause many deaths). There are other sources of doubt as well. All the human victims of B.S.E.-linked encephalopathy identified so far had a piece of genetic coding found in only thirty-eight per cent of the population. (To be precise, they were homozygous for the amino acid methionine at polymorphic residue 129 of PrP.) The genetic coding in Collinge's mice is slightly different. (They are homozygous for another amino acid, valine, at the same place.) So perhaps these are the wrong kind of transgenic mice. Collinge is now working on developing mice that will be homozygous for methionine. But there may be other, unknown factors that influence the onset of the new prion disease. Useful though the transgenic mice are, you can't turn a mouse into a human being simply by tinkering with a single gene.

"Do the fourteen confirmed cases of new-variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob mean that we are at the start of an epidemic?" I asked Collinge, and he replied, with the greatest scrupulousness, "It's impossible to predict." That's what they all say. None of the front-line prion scientists are willing to make a forecast on the basis of the evidence to date. "There were thousands of cases before we knew what was happening with AIDS. We have only fourteen cases of new-variant C.J.D.," Collinge says. (By cases, he means only those confirmed by direct examination of brain tissue. I have heard in scientific circles that doctors are now monitoring another sixty suspected cases.) A decade ago, there were only a handful of known cases of

B.S.E.; on that basis no one could accurately predict its course. This, broadly speaking, is where we are now with the new human disease. The graph of B.S.E. epidemiology is a classic exponential curve; we can only hope that the graph of new-variant C.J.D. incidence will look nothing like it.

THERE'S an old story about losing your way in the countryside, stopping to ask directions, and being told, "Well, if I were you, I wouldn't try to get there from here." That place—the one nobody wants to set out from—is where we in Britain are now with B.S.E. To some extent, we are entitled to feel unlucky. "Cheap food at any price" is a bad policy, but we aren't the only ones to have followed it. If it turns out that B.S.E. started with a freak single case of sporadic prion disease which got recycled through the rendering process, we can feel ourselves especially unfortunate—because that would mean that something like B.S.E. could have happened (and could still happen) anywhere a cow or a pig or a chicken or a sheep, or any animal that we eventually eat, is fed meat-and-bone meal.

If B.S.E. had happened somewhere else, however, it wouldn't have encountered MAFF. For a decade now, MAFF and the government have been the opposite of the boy who cried wolf: they kept saying there was nothing out there, despite the fact that we could all hear snufflings and grunts, and even the occasional full-blooded howl. Now the beast is in plain sight. We can agree that MAFF and its scientists have a duty not to frighten the public and damage the producers by overreacting to scares. Scientists felt genuine shock when the news broke about new-variant C.J.D.; they genuinely didn't think this was going to happen. But that's not good enough. Right from the time of its diagnosis as a spongiform encephalopathy, it was apparent that B.S.E. belonged to an exceptionally unpleasant family of diseases, about which crucial scientific questions remained unanswered. Scientists talk loftily about "risk management," and about the fact that people are much more likely to die in a car accident, of smoking, or indeed of heart disease from eating beef, than from B.S.E.—all of which rather misses the point. Smoking, driving, or parachuting while eating béarnaise sauce is a rational risk, in that we undertake it in cognizance of the dangers (more or less) and with our eyes metaphorically open. If MAFF had put up posters and taken out TV advertisements explaining what was actually known about B.S.E. and other T.S.E.s, then we would have been able to make a decision and take a rational risk. But they didn't trust us to choose on our own behalf. They chose for us, and they chose wrong.

Here, in the place where we don't want to be, we know that one of three things will happen. First, there's the theoretical possibility that there is no connection whatsoever between B.S.E. and the new human disease. Unfortunately, scientists aren't looking anywhere other than at B.S.E. for the cause of new-variant C.J.D., and a real consensus has solidified on the existence of a link (which may well be as difficult to "prove" as the link between tobacco and lung cancer). Second, there's the apocalyptic scenario—that all parts of the infected cow are infective and the species barrier is nonexistent. In that case, anyone who had eaten any part of the seven hundred and twenty-nine thousand infected cattle would come down with a fatal brain disease—a disaster of Old Testament proportions. This, too, seems highly unlikely, since there is no evidence that muscle tissue is infective, and we already know, thanks to Collinge's mice, that some form of species barrier is in place. Third, it may turn out that B.S.E. does cause a fatal human disease but that the species barrier is such that only a minority of those exposed to it succumb. This seems to be the most realistic prediction. It means that over the next several years—over the next decades, if kuru is any guide—the death toll will fall between the current total of twelve and some other, darker figure. "I think we will see more cases," Collinge says, "but it's far, far too early to say what sort of epidemic it's going to be—whether it's going to be twenty or thirty cases over several years or whether it's going to be hundreds or potentially thousands of cases. We have to wait and see." Professor Pattison, the chairman of SEAC, agrees. "The figures could have been much more alarming by now," he has said. "But the fact that they aren't doesn't mean that we're not going to have an epidemic—not yet." Pattison, the highest-profile scientific spokesperson on the subject of prion diseases, makes no secret of the fact that his own grandson isn't allowed to eat beef. ♦

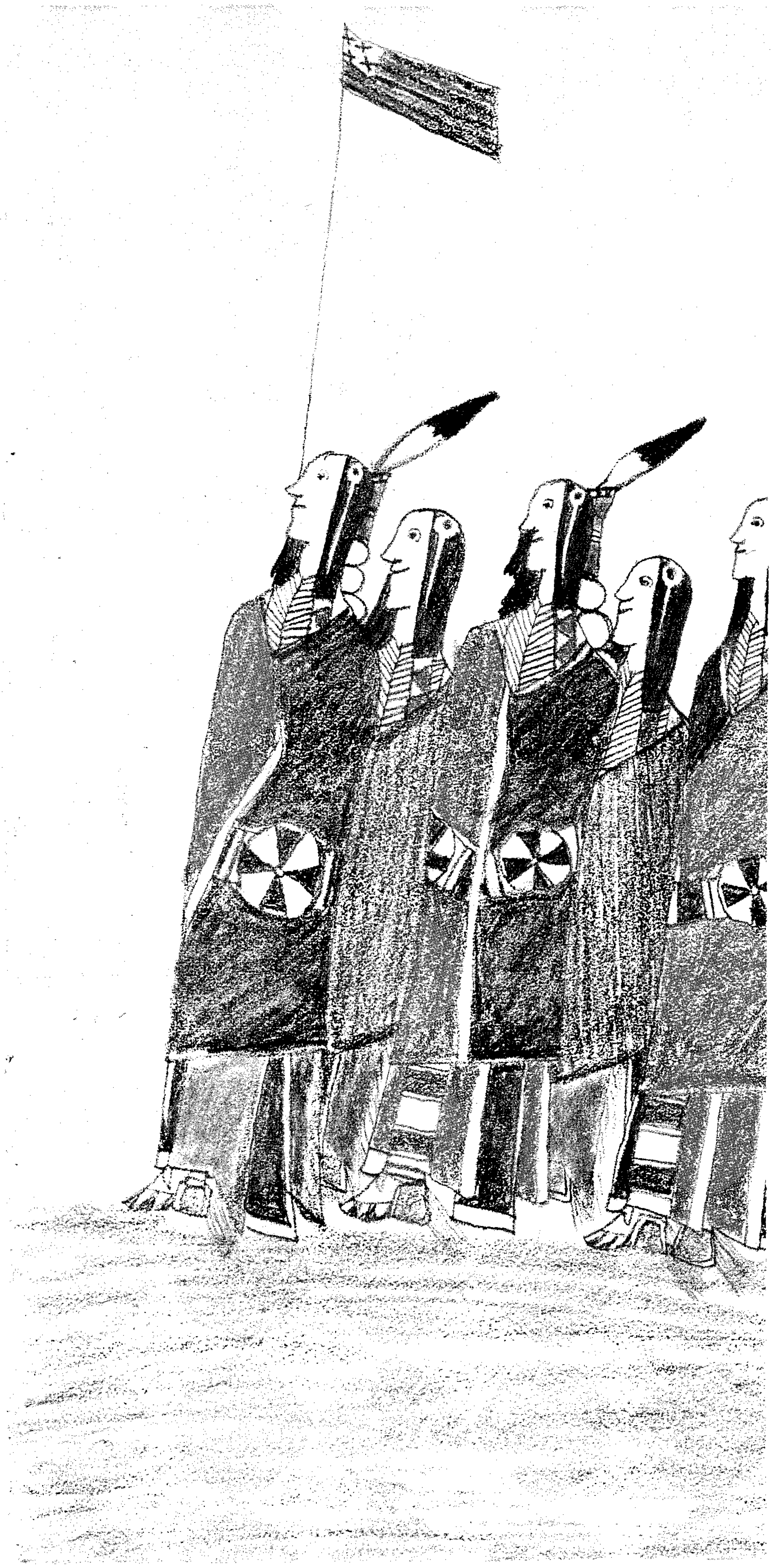
"You inhabit the body of someone who has an impressive résumé."

AT THE GALLERIES

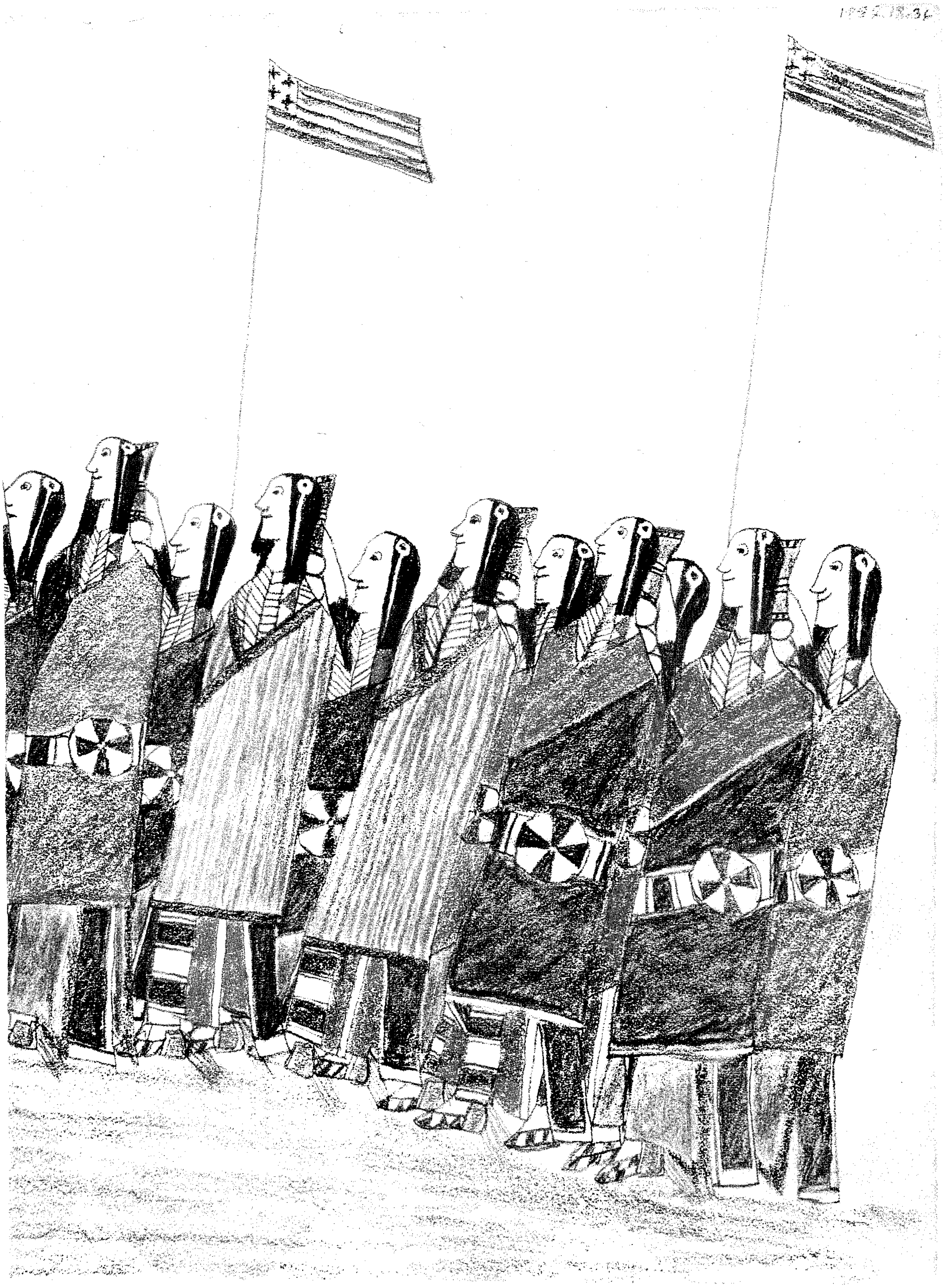
THE LONG BOOKS

ART as narrative has not been much in the forefront of our attention, but the ledger drawings that make up the body of "Plains Indian Drawings 1865-1935," at The Drawing Center, in SoHo (until December 21st), convey a sense of the difficulty of history, along with its compelling and sometimes overwhelming emotions. In the closing decades of the last century, artists from the Cheyenne, Kiowa, Arapaho, and Lakota nations appropriated from white storekeepers and Army supply sergeants the humble business ledger and on its elongated pages drew an extraordinary pictorial record of who and what they had been: how they had lived and hunted and fought, how they had identified themselves and their enemies, what they held true as belief—all at the very moment when this indigenous history was being torn away from them and forever altered. Vivid figures of young horsemen like the Lakota warrior Okicinintawa, moving depictions of the Sun Dance ritual or the wearers of the Ghost Dance shirt, and even placid portrayals of courting couples or a small campfire are imbued for white Americans with bitterness or unshakable sadness, because of our inherited part in their destruction. But the adaptation of the ledgers by these artists, along with their skilled use of the white man's pencils and crayons and watercolors, suggests a more complicated response. This art was not just a record of loss but part of a process of preservation and survival; resistance and acquiescence flow into the same picture, and the white men intent on reëducating the savages are being reeducated themselves. Some of the great Indian artists—Howling Wolf, Wohaw, Bear's Heart, and Making Medicine—achieved their heights while exiled to the euphemistic Fort Marion, a Florida prison with the tenet "In order to save the man, we must kill the Indian." Even as they were being Europeanized, they appear to have sensed that irredeemable tragedy is a romantic notion, and that the sophistication of art is a source of untouchable strength.

—ROGER ANGELL

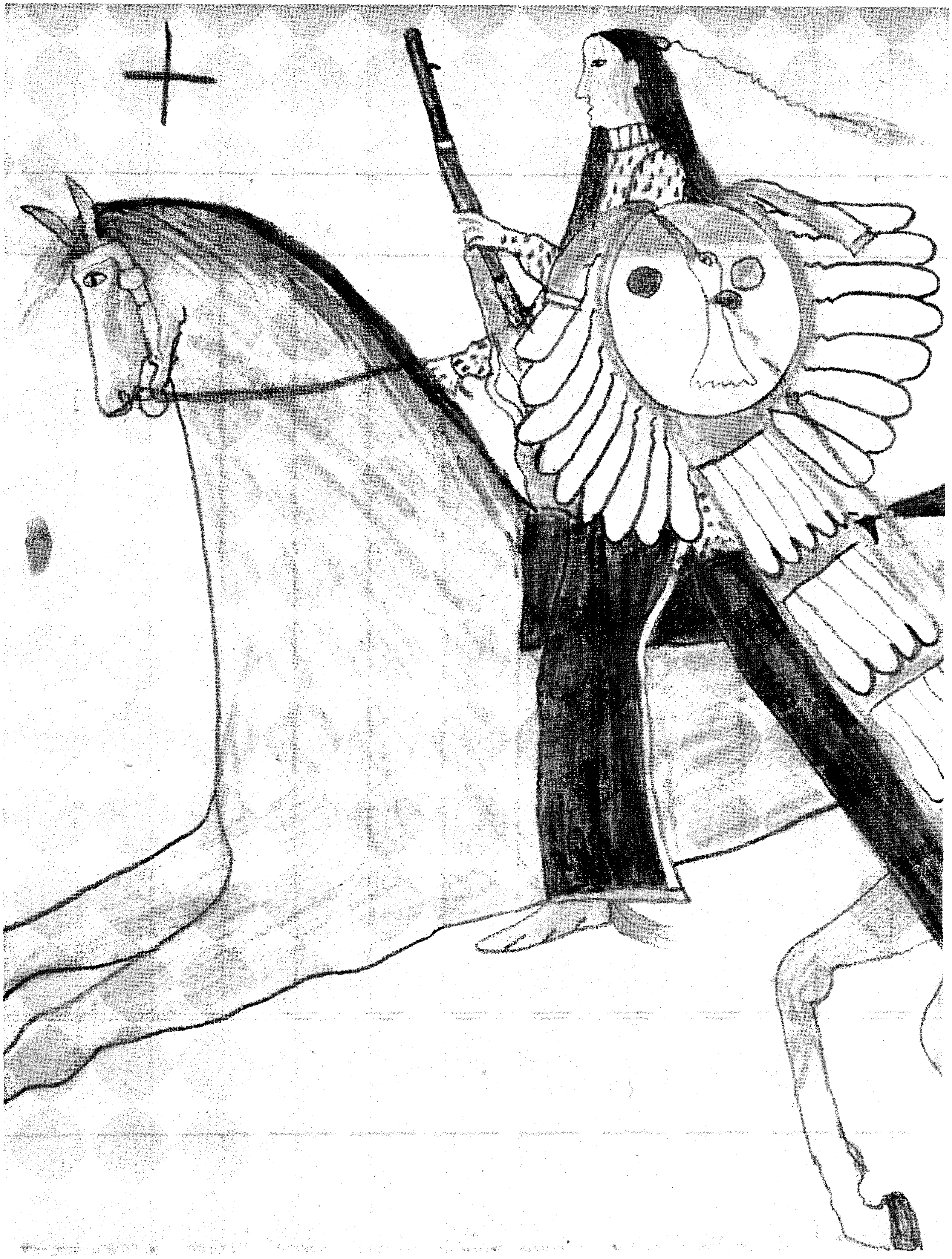


In a blaze of ceremonial pattern, beadings, and fine moccasins, sixteen Pla



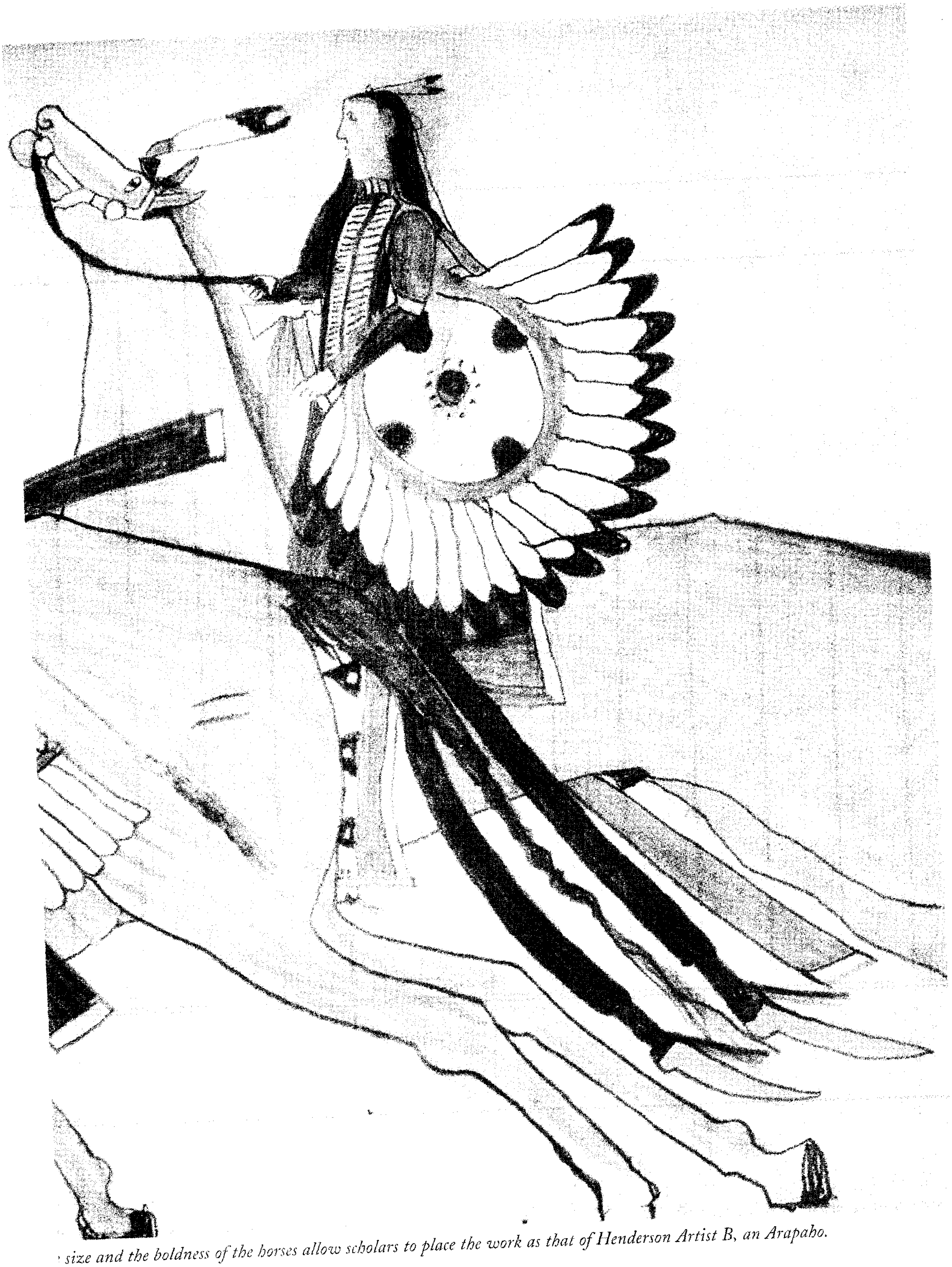
dian leaders are portrayed by the Kiowa artist Wohaw as they assembled, perhaps for treaty talks, under the white man's flags.

MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY, ST. LOUIS/COURTESY THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS



MR. AND MRS. CHARLES DIKER/COURTESY THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS.

Precise details of shield design and tail-wrappings of these warriors formed an identifying native language, wh



size and the boldness of the horses allow scholars to place the work as that of Henderson Artist B, an Arapaho.

FICTION

KILLING BABIES

BY T. CORAGHESSAN BOYLE

WHEN I got out of rehab for the second time, there were some legal complications, and the judge—an old jerk who looked like they'd just kicked him out of the Politburo—decided I needed a sponsor. There was a problem with some checks I'd been writing for a while there when all my resources were going up the glass tube, and since I didn't have a record except for traffic infractions and a juvenile possession when I was fifteen, the court felt inclined to mercy. Was there anybody who could speak up for me, my attorney wondered, anybody financially responsible? Philip, I said, my brother Philip. He's a doctor.

So Philip. He lived in Detroit, a place I'd never been to, a place where it gets cold in winter and the only palm trees are under glass in the botanical gardens. It would be a change, a real change. But a change is what I needed, and the judge liked the idea that he wouldn't have to see me in Pasadena anymore and that I'd have a room in Philip's house with Philip's wife and my nephews, Josh and Jeff, and that I would be gainfully employed doing lab work at Philip's obstetrical clinic for the princely sum of six dollars and twenty-five cents an hour.

So Philip. He met me at the airport, his thirty-eight-year-old face as trenched with anal-retentive misery as our father's was in the year before he died. His hair was going, I saw that right away, and his glasses were too big for his head. And his shoes—he was wearing a pair of brown suede boatlike things that would have had people running for the exits at the Rainbow Club. I hadn't seen him in six years, not since the funeral, that is, and I wouldn't have even recognized him if it wasn't for his eyes—they were just like mine, as blue and icy as a bottle of Aqua Velva. "Little brother," he said, and he tried to gather a smile around the thin flaps of his lips while he stood there gaping at me like somebody who hadn't come to the airport specifically to fetch his down-on-his-luck brother and was bewildered to discover him there.

"Philip," I said, and I set down my two carry-on bags to pull him to me in a full-body, back-thumping, chest-to-chest embrace, as if I was glad to see him. But I wasn't glad to see him. Not particularly. Philip was ten years older than me, and ten years is a lot when you're a kid. By the time I knew his name he was in college, and when I was expressing myself with my father's vintage Mustang, a Ziploc baggie of marijuana, and a can of high-gloss spray paint he was in medical school. I'd never much liked him and he felt about the same toward me, and as I embraced him there in the Detroit airport I wondered how that was going to play out over the course of the six months the judge had given me to stay out of trouble and make full restitution or serve the next six in jail.

"Have a good flight?" Philip asked when I was done embracing him.

I stood back from him a moment, the bags at my feet, and couldn't help being honest with him; that's just the way I am. "You look like shit, Philip," I said. "You look like Dad just before he died—or maybe after he died."

A woman with a big shining planetoid of a face stopped to give me a look, then hitched up her skirt and stamped on by in her heels. The carpeting smelled of chemicals. Outside the dirt-splotched windows was snow, a substance I'd had precious little experience of. "Don't start, Rick," Philip said. "I'm in no mood. Believe me."

I shouldered my bags, stooped over a cigarette, and lit it just to irritate him. I was hoping he'd tell me there was a county ordinance against smoking in public places and that smoking was slow suicide, from a physician's point of view, but he didn't rise to the bait. He just stood there, looking harassed. "I'm not starting," I said. "I'm just . . . I don't know. I'm just concerned, that's all. I mean, you look like shit. I'm your brother. Shouldn't I be concerned?"

I thought he was going to start wondering aloud why *I* should be concerned about *him*, since I was the one on the run from an exasperated judicial system and twelve thousand and some-odd dollars in outstanding checks, but he surprised me. He just shrugged and shifted that lipless smile around a bit and said, "Maybe I've been working too hard."

PHILIP lived on Washtenaw Street, in an upscale housing development called Washtenaw Acres, big houses set back from the street and clustered around a lake glistening with black ice under a weak sky and weaker sun. The trees were stripped and ugly, like dead sticks rammed into the ground, and the snow wasn't what I'd expected. Somehow I'd thought it would be fluffy and soft, movie snow, big pillows of it cushioning the ground while kids whooshed through it on their sleds, but it wasn't like that at all. It lay on the ground like a scab, clots of dirt and yellow weed showing through in mangy patches. Bleak, that's what it was, but I told myself it was better than the Honor Rancho, a whole lot better, and as we pulled into the long sweeping driveway to Philip's house I put everything I had into feeling optimistic.

Denise had put on weight. She was waiting for us inside the door that led from the three-car garage into the kitchen. I didn't know her well enough to embrace her the way I'd embraced Philip, and I have to admit I was taken aback by the change in her—she was fat, there was nothing else to say about it—so I just filtered out the squeals of welcome and shook her hand as if it was something I'd found in the street. Besides which, the smell of dinner hit me square in the face, so overpowering it almost brought me to my knees. I hadn't been in a real kitchen with a real dinner

FILIP PAGOWSKI

in the oven since I was a kid and my mother was alive, because after she died, and with Philip away, it was just my father and me and we tended to go out a lot, especially on Sundays.

"You hungry?" Denise asked while we did an awkward little dance around the gleaming island of stainless steel and tile in the middle of the kitchen. "I'll bet you're starved," she said, "after all that bachelor cooking and the airplane food. And look at you—you're shivering. He's shivering, Philip."

I was, and no denying it.

"You can't run around in a T-shirt and leather jacket and expect to survive a Michigan winter—it might be all right for L.A. maybe, but not here." She turned to Philip, who'd been standing there as if someone had crept up on him and nailed his shoes to the floor. "Philip, haven't you got a parka for Rick? How about that blue one with the red lining you never wear anymore? And a pair of gloves, for God's sake. Get him a pair of gloves, will you?" She came back to me then, all smiles: "We can't have our California boy getting frostbite, now, can we?"

Philip agreed that we couldn't, and we all stood there smiling at one another till I said, "Isn't anybody going to offer me a drink?"

Then it was my nephews—red-faced howling babies in dirty yellow diapers the last time I'd seen them, at the funeral that had left me an orphan at twenty-three, little fists glomming onto the cold cuts while drool descended toward the dip—but here they were, eight and six, edging up to me in high-tops and oversized sweatshirts while I threw back my brother's Scotch. "Hey," I said, grinning till I thought my head would burst, "remember me? I'm your Uncle Rick."

They didn't remember me—how could they?—but they brightened at the sight of the two yellow bags of M&M peanut candies I'd thought to pick up at the airport newsstand. Josh, the eight-year-old, took the candy gingerly from my hand, while his brother looked on to see if I was going to sprout fangs and start puking up black vomit. We were all sitting around the living room, very clean, very *Home & Garden*, getting acquainted. Philip and Denise held on to their drinks as if they were afraid somebody was going to steal them. We were all grinning. "What's that on your eyebrow?" Josh said.

I reached up and fingered the thin gold loop. "It's a ring," I said. "You know, like an earring, only it's in my eyebrow."

No one said anything for a long moment. Jeff, the younger one, looked as if he was going to start crying. "Why?" Josh said finally, and Philip laughed and I couldn't help myself—I laughed, too. It was all right. Everything was all right. Philip was my brother and Denise was my sister-in-law and these kids with their wide-open faces and miniature Guess jeans were my nephews. I shrugged, laughing still. "Because it's cool," I said, and I didn't even mind the look Philip gave me.

Later, after I'd actually crawled into the top bunk and read the kids a Dr. Seuss story that set off all sorts of bells in my head, Philip and Denise and I discussed my future over coffee and homemade cinnamon rolls. My immediate future, that is—as in tomorrow morning, 8 A.M., at the clinic. I was going to be an entry-level drudge despite my three years of college, my musical background and family connections, rinsing out test tubes and sweeping the floors and disposing of whatever was left in the stainless-steel trays when my brother and his colleagues finished with their "procedures."

"All right," I said. "Fine. I've got no problem with that."

Denise had tucked her legs up under her on the couch. She was wearing a striped caftan that could have sheltered armies. "Philip had a black man on full time, just till a week ago, nicest man you'd ever want to meet—and bright, too, very bright—but he, uh, didn't feel . . ."

Philip's voice came out of the shadows at the end of the couch, picking up where she'd left off. "He went on to something better," he said, regarding me steadily through the clear walls of his glasses. "I'm afraid the work isn't all that mentally demanding—or stimulating, for that matter—but, you know, little brother, it's a start, and, well—"

"Yeah, I know," I said, "beggars can't be choosers." I wanted to add to that, to maybe soften it a bit—I didn't want him to get the idea I wasn't grateful, because I was—but I never got the opportunity. Just then the phone rang. I looked up at the sound—it wasn't a ring exactly, more like a bleat, *eh-eh-eh-eh-eh*—and saw that my brother and his wife were staring into each other's eyes in shock, as if a bomb had just gone off. Nobody moved. I counted two more rings before Denise said, "I wonder who that could be at this hour?" and Philip, my brother with the receding hairline and the too big glasses and his own eponymous clinic in suburban Detroit, said, "Forget it, ignore it, it's nobody."

And that was strange, because we sat there in silence and listened to that phone ring over and over—twenty times, twenty times at least—until whoever it was on the other end finally gave up. Another minute ticked by, the silence howling in our ears, and then Philip stood, looked at his watch, and said, "What do you think—time to turn in?"

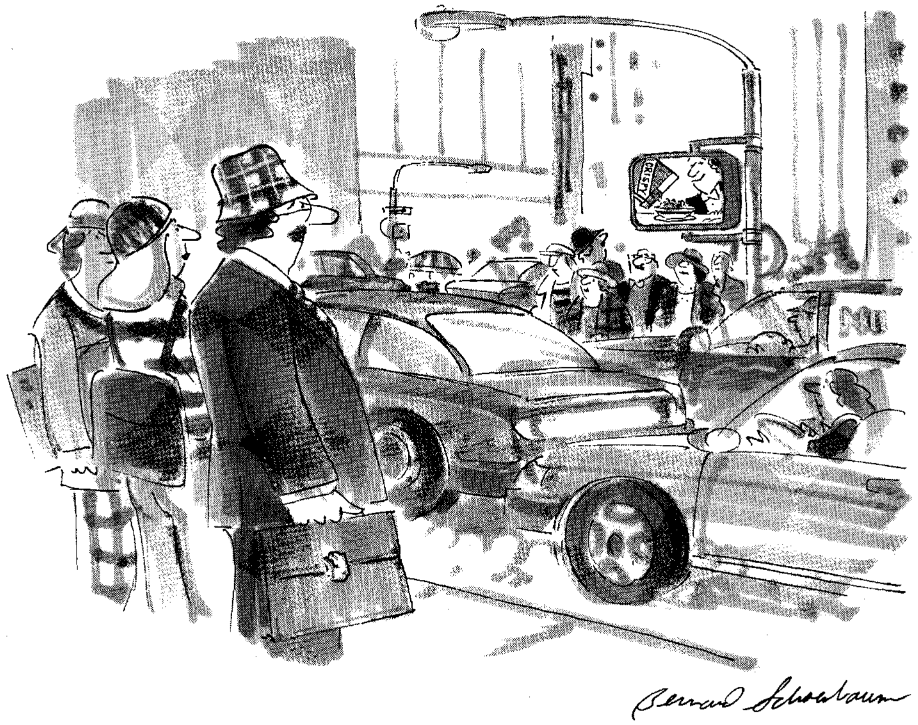
I WASN'T stupid, not particularly—no stupider than anybody else, anyway—and I was no criminal, either. I'd just drifted into a kind of thick sludge of hopelessness after I dropped out of school for a band I put my whole being into, a band that disintegrated within the year, and one thing led to another. Jobs came and went. I spent a lot of time on the couch, channel-surfing and thumbing through books that used to mean something to me. I found women and lost them. And I learned that a line up your nose is a dilettante's thing, wasteful and extravagant. I started smoking, two or three nights a week, and then it was five or six nights a week and then it was every day, all day, and why not? That was how I felt. Sure. And now I was in Michigan, starting over.

Anyway, it wouldn't have taken a genius to understand why my brother and his wife had let that phone ring—not after Philip and I swung into the parking lot behind the clinic at seven-forty-five the next morning. I wasn't even awake, really—it was four-forty-five West Coast time, an hour that gave me a headache even to imagine, much less live through. Beyond the misted-up windows, everything was gloom, a kind of frozen fog hanging in air the color of lemon ice. The trees, I saw, hadn't sprouted leaves overnight. Every curb was a repository of frozen trash.

Philip and I had been making small talk on the way in to town, very small talk, out of consideration for the way I was feeling. Denise had given me coffee, which was about all I could take at that hour, but Philip had gobbled a big bowl of bran flakes and sunflower seeds with skim milk, and the boys, shy around me all over again, spooned up

Lucky Charms and Frosted Flakes in silence. I came out of my daze the minute the tires hit the concrete apron separating the private property of the lot from the public space of the street: there were people there, a whole shadowy mass of shoulders and hats and steaming faces that converged on us with a shout. At first I didn't know what was going on—I thought I was trapped in a bad movie, "Night of the Living Dead" or "Zombies on Parade." The faces were barking at us, teeth bared, eyes sunk back in their heads, hot breath boiling from their throats. "Murderers!" they were shouting. "Nazis!" "Baby-killers!"

We inched our way across the sidewalk and into the lot, working through the mass of them as if we were on a narrow lane in a dense forest, and Philip gave me a look that explained it all, from the lines in his face to Denise's fat to the phone that rang in the middle of the night no matter how many times he changed the number. This was war. I climbed out of the car with my heart hammering, and as the cold knife of the air cut into me I looked back to where they stood clustered at the gate, lumpish and solid, people you'd see anywhere. They were singing now. Some hymn, some self-righteous churchy Jesus-thumping hymn that bludgeoned the traffic noise and the deep-frozen air with the force of a weapon. I didn't have time to sort it out, but I could feel the slow burn of anger and humiliation coming up on me. Philip's hand was on my arm. "Come on," he said. "We've got work to do, little brother."



THAT day, the first day, was a real trial. Yes, I was turning over a new leaf, and yes, I was determined to succeed and thankful to my brother and the judge and the great giving, forgiving society I belonged to, but this was more than I'd bargained for. I had no illusions about the job—I knew it would be dull and diminishing, and I knew life with Philip and Denise would be one long snooze, but I wasn't used to being called a baby-killer. Liar, thief, crackhead—those were names I'd answered to at one time or another. Murderer was something else.

My brother wouldn't talk about it. He was busy. Wired. Hurtling around the clinic like a gymnast on the parallel bars. By nine I'd met his two associates (another doctor and a counsellor, both female, both unattractive); his receptionist; Nurses Tsing and Hempfield; and Fred. Fred was a big rabbity-looking guy in his early thirties with a pale reddish mustache and hair of the same color climbing up out of his head in all directions. He had the official title of "technician," though the most technical things I saw him do were drawing blood and divining urine for signs of pregnancy, clap, or worse. None of them—not my brother, the nurses, the counsellor, or even Fred—wanted to discuss what was going on at the far end of the parking lot and on the sidewalk out front. The zombies with the signs—yes, signs, I could see them out the window, "Abortion Kills" and "Save the Preborns" and "I Will Adopt Your Baby"—were of no more concern to them than mosquitoes in June or a sniffle in December. Or at least that was how they acted.

I tried to draw Fred out on the subject as we sat together at lunch in the back room. We were surrounded by shadowy things in jars of formalin, gleaming stainless-steel sinks, racks of test tubes, reference books, cardboard boxes full of drug samples and syringes and gauze pads and all the rest of the clinic's paraphernalia. "So what do you think of all this, Fred?" I said, gesturing toward the window with the ham-and-Swiss on rye Denise had made me in the dark hours of the morning.

Fred was hunched over a newspaper, doing the acrostic puzzle and sucking on his teeth. His lunch consisted of a microwave chili-and-cheese burrito and a quart of root beer. He gave me a quizzical look.

"The protesters, I mean. The Jesus-thumpers out there. Is it like this all the time?" And then I added a little joke, so he wouldn't think I was intimidated: "Or did I just get lucky?"

"Who, them?" Fred did something with his nose and his upper teeth, something rabbity, as if he were tasting the air. "They're nobody. They're nothing."

"Yeah?" I said, hoping for more, hoping for some details, some explanation, something to assuage the creeping sense of guilt and shame that had been building in me all morning. Those people had pigeonholed me before I'd even set foot in the door, and that hurt. They were wrong. I was no baby-killer—I was just the little brother of a big brother, trying to make a new start. And Philip was no baby-killer, either—he was a guy doing his job, that was all. Shit, somebody had to do it. Up to this point, I guess I'd never really given the issue much thought—my girlfriends, when there were girlfriends, had taken care of the preventative end of things on their own and we never really discussed it—but my feeling was that there were too many babies in the world already, too many adults, too many suet-faced Jesus-thumping jerks ready to point the finger, and didn't any of these people have better things to do? Like a job, for instance?

But Fred wasn't much help. He just sighed, nibbled at the wilted stem of his burrito, and said, "You get used to it."

I wondered about that as the afternoon crept by, and then my mind went numb from jet lag and the general wash of misery and I let my body take over. I scrubbed out empty jars and test tubes with Clorox, labelled and filed the full ones on the racks that lined the walls, stood at Fred's elbow and watched as he squeezed drops of urine onto strips of litmus paper and made notations in a ledger. My white lab coat got progressively dirtier. Every once in a while I'd come to and catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror over the sinks, the mad scientist exposed, the baby-killer, the rinser of test tubes and secreter of urine, and have an ironic little laugh at my own expense. And then it started to get dark, Fred vanished, and I was introduced to mop and squeegee. It was around then, when I just happened to be taking a cigarette break by the only window in the room, that I caught a glimpse of one of our last tardy patients of the day hurrying up the sidewalk elbow to elbow with a grim middle-aged woman whose face screamed *I am her mother!*

The girl was sixteen, seventeen maybe, a pale face, pale as a bulb, and nothing showing on her, at least not with the big white doughboy parka she was wearing. She looked scared, her little mouth clamped tight, her eyes fixed on her feet. She was wearing black leggings that seemed to sprout from the folds of the parka and a pair of furry white ankle boots that were like house slippers. I watched her glide through the dead world on the flowing stalks of her legs, a spoiled pouty chalk-cheeked sweetness to her face, and it moved something in me, something long buried beneath a mountain of grainy little yellow-white rocks. Maybe she was just coming in for an examination, I thought, maybe that was it. Or she'd just become sexually active—or was thinking of it—and her mother was one step ahead of her. Either way, that was what I wanted to believe. With this girl, with her quick fluid step and downcast eyes and all the hope and misery they implied, I didn't want to think of "procedures."

They'd almost reached the building when the zombies began to stir. From where I was standing I couldn't see the front of the building, and the Jesus-thumpers had already begun to fade out of my consciousness, dim as it was. But they came crashing back into the picture now, right there at the corner of the building, shoulders and heads and placards, and one in particular. A shadow that separated itself from the mass and was instantly transformed into a hulking bearded zealot with snapping teeth and eyes like hard-boiled eggs. He came right up to the girl and her mother, rushing at them like a torpedo, and you could see how they shied away from him and how his head raged back on his shoulders, and then they ducked past the corner of the building and out of my line of sight.

I was stunned. This wasn't right, I was thinking, and I didn't want to get angry or depressed or emotional—keep on an even keel, that's what they tell you in rehab—but I couldn't help snuffing the cigarette and stepping quietly out into the hallway that ran the length of the building and gave me an unobstructed view of the front door. I moved forward almost against my will, my feet like toy cars on a track, and I hadn't got halfway down the hall before the door opened on the dwindling day and the dead sticks of the trees, and suddenly there she was, pale in a pale coat and her face two shades paler. We exchanged a look. I don't know what she saw in my eyes—weakness, hunger, fear—but I know what I saw in hers, and it was so poignant and so everlastingly sad I knew I'd never have another moment's rest till I took hold of it.

In the car on the way home Philip was so relaxed I wondered if he wasn't prescribing something for himself. Here was the antithesis of the ice man who'd picked me up at the airport, watched me eat pork chops, read to his children, and brush my teeth in the guest bathroom, and then thrown me to the wolves at the clinic. "Sorry about all that commotion this morning," he said, glancing at me in the glowing cubicle of the car. "I would have warned you, but you can never tell when they're going to pull something like that."

"So it gets better, is that what you're saying?"

"Not much," he said. "There's always a couple of them out there, the real hard-core nuts. But the whole crew of the walking dead like you saw today, that's maybe only once a week. Unless they go on one of their campaigns, and I can't figure out what provokes them—the weather, the tides in the lake, the phases of the moon—but then they go all out, theatre in the street, schoolchildren, the works. They throw themselves under the wheels, handcuff themselves to the front door—it's a real zoo."

"But what about the cops? Can't you get a restraining order or something?"

He shrugged, fiddled with the tape player—opera, he was listening to opera, a thin screech of it in the night—and turned to me again, his gloved hands rigid on the wheel. "The cops are a bunch of pro-lifers, and they have no objection to those people out there harassing my patients and abridging their civil rights, and even the women just coming in for an exam have to walk the gauntlet. It's hell on business, believe me. And it's dangerous, too. They scare me, the real crazies, the ones that shoot people. You've heard of John Britton? David Gunn? George Tiller?"

"I don't know," I said. "Maybe. You've got to realize I've been out of touch for a while."

"Shot down by people like the ones you saw out there today. Two of them died."

I didn't like hearing that. The thought of one of those nutballs attacking my brother, attacking me, was like throwing gasoline on a bed of hot coals. I'd never been one to turn the other cheek, and I didn't feature martyrdom, not at all. I looked out on a blur of brake lights and the crust of ice that seemed to narrow the road into a funnel ahead of us. "Why don't you shoot them first?" I said.

My brother's voice was hard. "Sometimes I wish I could."

We stopped to pick up a few things at the market and then we were home, dinner stabbing at my salivary glands, the whole house warm and sugary with it, and Philip sat down to watch the news and have a Scotch with me. Denise was right there at the door when we came in—and now we embraced, no problem, sister- and brother-in-law, one big happy family. She wanted to know how my day was, and before I could open my mouth she was answering for me: "Not much of a challenge, huh? Pretty dull, right? Except for the crazies—they never fail to liven things up, do they? What Philip goes through, huh, Philip? Philip?"

I was beat, but the Scotch smoked through my veins, the kids came and sat beside me on the couch with their comics and coloring books, and I felt good, felt like part of the family and no complaints. Denise served a beef brisket with oven-roasted potatoes, carrots, and onions, a fresh green salad, and coconut-creme pie for dessert. I was planning on turning in early, but I drifted into the boys' room and took over the "Winnie-the-Pooh" chores from my brother because it was something I wanted to do. Later, it must have been about ten, I was stretched out on my own bed—and again I had to hand it to Denise, because the room was homey and private, done up with little knickknacks and embroidery work and whatnot—when my brother poked his head in the door. "So," he said, mellow with the Scotch and whatever else, "you feeling O.K. about everything?"

That touched me. It did. Here I'd come into the airport with a chip on my shoulder—I'd always been jealous of Philip, the great shining success my father measured me against—thinking my big brother was going to be an asshole and that assholery would rule the day, but it wasn't like that at all. He was reaching out. He was a doctor. He knew about human foibles and addictions and he knew about his little brother, and he cared, he actually cared. "Yeah" was all I could manage, but I hoped the quality of my voice conveyed a whole lot more than that.

"Good," he said, framed in the light from the hallway, his sunken orbits and rucked face and flat shining eyes giving him a look of wisdom and calm that reminded me of our father on his good days.

"That girl," I said, inspired by the intimacy of the moment, "the last one that came in today?"

His expression changed. Now it was quizzical, distant, as if he were looking at me through the wrong end of a telescope. "What girl? What are you talking about?"

"The young-looking one in the white parka and furry boots? The last one. The last one in. I was just wondering if, uh, I mean, what her problem was—if she was, you know, coming in for a procedure or whatever. . . . "

"Listen, Rick," he said then, and his voice was back in the deep freeze, "I'm willing to give you a chance here, not only for Dad's sake but for your own sake, too. But there's one thing I ask—stay away from the patients. And I'm not really asking."

IT was raining the next morning, a cold rain that congealed on the hood of the car and made a cold pudding of the sidewalk out front of the house. I wondered if the weather would discourage the Jesus-thumpers, but they were there, all right, in yellow rain slickers and green gum boots, sunk into their suffering with gratitude. Nobody rushed the car when we turned in to the lot. They just stood there, eight of them, five men and three women, and looked hate at us. As we got out of the car, the frozen rain pelting us, I locked eyes across the lot with the bearded jerk who'd gone after the girl in the white parka. I waited till I was good and certain I had his attention, waited till he was about to shout out some hoarse Jesus-thumping accusation, and then I gave him the finger.

We were the first ones at the clinic, what with the icy roads, and as soon as my brother disappeared into the sanctum of his office I went straight to the receptionist's desk and flipped back the page of the appointment book. The last entry, under four-thirty the previous day, was staring me in the face, neat block letters in blue metalpoint: "Sally Strunt," it read, and there was a phone number jotted beneath the name. It took me exactly ten seconds, and then I was in the back room, innocently slipping into my lab coat. Sally Strunt, I whispered to myself, Sally Strunt, over and over. I'd never known anyone named Sally—it was an old-fashioned name, a hokey name, Dick and Jane and Sally, and because it was old-fashioned and because it was hokey it seemed perfect for a teen-ager in trouble in the grim sleety washed-out navel of the Midwest. This was no downtown Amber, no Crystal or Shanna—this was Detroit Sally, and that really appealed to me. I'd seen the face attached to the name, and the mother of that face. *Sally, Sally, Sally.* Her name sang through my head as I schmoozed with Fred and the nurses and went through the motions of the job that already felt as circumscribed and deadening as a prison sentence.

That night, after dinner, I excused myself and strolled six cold wintry blocks to the convenience store. I bought

SHOWCASE BY FRANÇOIS-MARIE BANIER

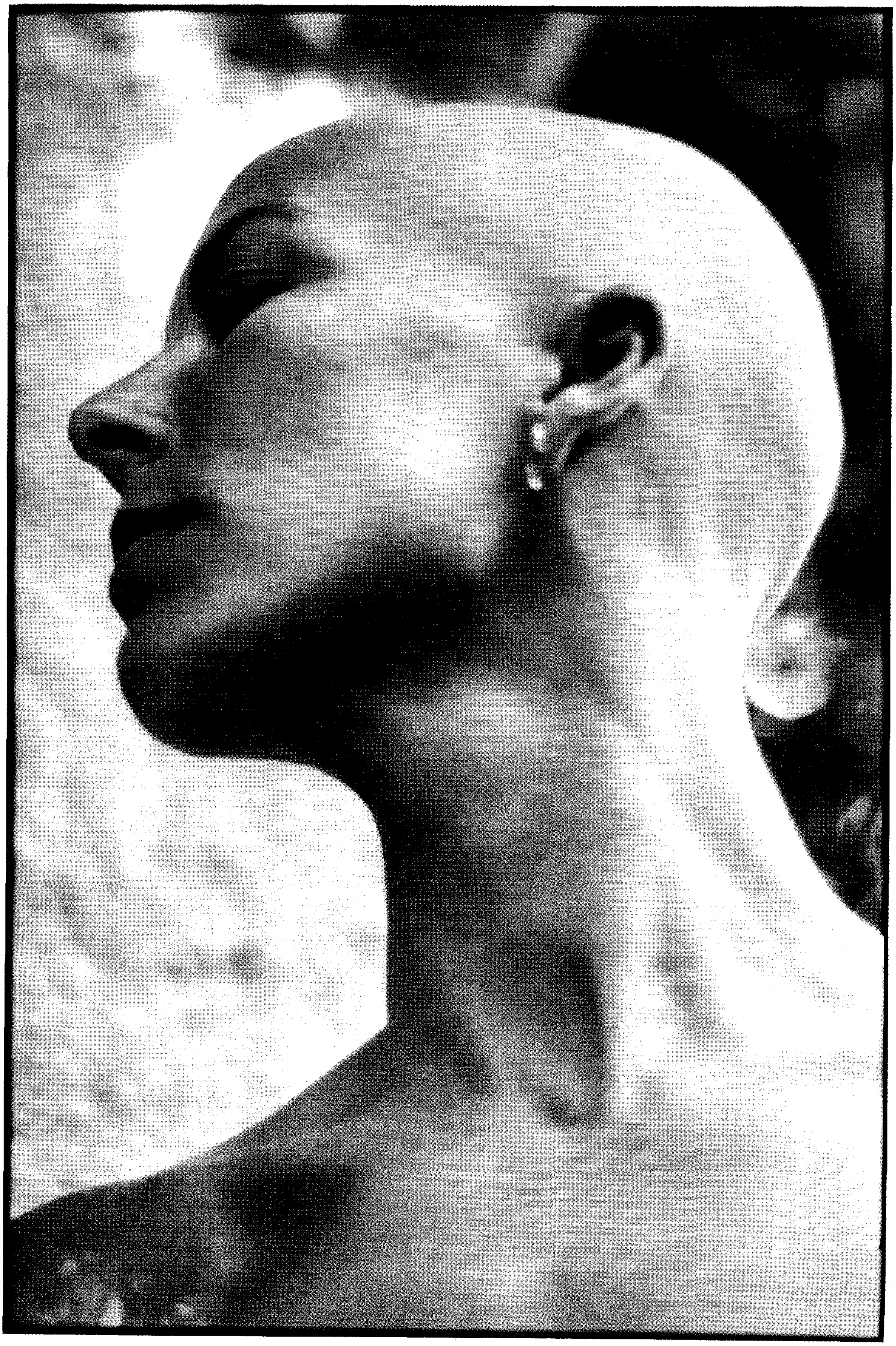
LE CLOSEUP

FRANÇOIS-MARIE BANIER must be the best-connected photographer in France. His favorite subjects are the *gratin* of Paris's social, literary, theatrical, fashion, and political establishments, from Marie Laure de Noailles to Isabelle Adjani, leavened by occasional portraits of indelibly anonymous street people. Banier, who is also a well-regarded novelist and playwright, kept his photographic work mostly to himself until 1991, when he had his first show, at (where else?) the Centre Georges Pompidou. He makes an impressive United States début this month with "Past Present" (Morrow; $50), a book of his images that spans three decades.

Banier's portraits take us in very close to their subjects. Madeleine Renaud and Jean-Louis Barrault, for so many years the reigning genies of French theatre, sit on a street bench looking all but overcome by the weariness of age. The cellist Mstislav Rostropovich shuts his eyes in an effort to contain irrepressible mirth. The exquisite Adjani sticks out her tongue and turns into a furious maenad. The equally exquisite Truman Capote (1968 version) is a bright-eyed elf in a zippered fur jacket, while Samuel Beckett, age eighty-three, looks astonishingly handsome and serene—not a trace of angst. A malevolent Mitterrand mounts the steps to his airplane, a red carpet stretching endlessly behind him on the nearly empty tarmac.

The book's most intimate portrait is also the most startling: a profile of Princess Caroline of Monaco with her head shaved egg-bald. Why did the thirty-nine-year-old princess allow him to photograph her in this unexplained condition (the cause of much frantic speculation in the tabloids)? One explanation may be that she looks as beautiful and as mysterious as the three-thousand-year-old portrait heads of Queen Nefertiti now on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Like many photographers who work in the shadow of Henri Cartier-Bresson, Banier aspires to high art, and sometimes (with his connections) comes close to it. —CALVIN TOMKINS

Princess Caroline of Monaco, 1996.



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M&M's for the boys, some white chocolate for Denise, and a litre of Black Cat malt liquor for myself. Then I dialled Sally's number from the phone booth out front of the store.

A man answered, impatient, harassed. "Yeah?"

"Sally there?" I said.

"Who's this?"

I took a stab at it: "Chris Ryan. From school?"

Static. Televised dialogue. The roar of Sally's name and the sound of approaching feet and Sally's approaching voice: "Who is it?" And then, into the receiver: "Hello?"

"Sally?" I said.

"Yes?" There was hope in that voice, eagerness. She wanted to hear from me—or from whoever. This wasn't the voice of a girl concealing things. It was open, frank, friendly. I felt expansive suddenly, connected, felt as if everything was going to be all right, not only for me but for Sally, too.

"You don't know me," I said quickly, "but I really admire you. I mean, your courage. I admire what you're doing."

"Who is this?"

"Chris," I said. "Chris Ryan. I saw you yesterday, at the clinic, and I really admire you, but I just wanted to know if, uh, if you need anything."

Her voice narrowed, thin as wire. "What are you talking about?"

"Sally," I said, and I didn't know what I was doing or what I was feeling but I couldn't help myself, "Sally, can I ask you something? Are you pregnant, or are you—?"

Click. She hung up on me. Just like that.

I was frozen through by the time I got back with the kids' M&M's and Denise's white chocolate, and I'd finished off the beer on the way and flung the empty bottle up under a squat artificial-looking spruce on the neighbor's lawn. I'd tried Sally twice more, after an interval of fifteen or twenty minutes, but her father answered the first time and when I dialled again the phone just rang and kept on ringing.

A WEEK went by. I scrubbed out test tubes and jars that smelled powerfully of the urine of strange women and learned that Fred didn't much care for Afro-Americans, Mexicans, Haitians, Cubans, Poles, or Hmong tribesmen. I tried Sally's number three more times and each time I was rebuffed—threatened, actually—and I began to realize I was maybe just a bit out of line. Sally didn't need me—she had her father and mother and maybe a gangling big-footed slam-dunking brother into the bargain—and every time I glanced through the blinds in the back room I saw another girl just like her. Still, I was feeling itchy and out of sorts despite all Denise and Philip and my nephews were doing for me, and I needed some sort of focus, a plan, something to make me feel good about myself. They'd warned us about this in rehab, and I knew this was the trickiest stage, the time when the backsliders start looking up their old friends and hanging out on the street corner. But I didn't have any old friends, not in Detroit, anyway, and the street corner was about as inviting as the polar ice cap. On Saturday night I went out to a bar that looked as if it had been preserved under Plexiglas in a museum somewhere, and I came on to a couple of girls and drank too much and woke up the next morning with a headache.

Then it was Monday and I was sitting at the breakfast table with my brother and my two nephews and it was raining again. Sleeting, actually. I wanted to go back to bed. I toyed with the idea of telling Philip I was sick, but he'd probably insist on inserting the rectal thermometer himself. He sat across from me, expressionless, crunching away at his bran flakes and sunflower seeds, the newspaper spread out before him. Denise bustled around the kitchen brewing coffee and shoving things into the microwave while the boys and I smeared Eggo waffles with butter and syrup. "So," I said, addressing my nephews over the pitcher of pure Grade A maple syrup, "you know why the California kids have it all over the Midwestern kids when it comes to baseball?"

Josh looked up from his waffles; Jeff was still on dreamtime.

"Because of this," I said, gesturing toward the dark windows and the drooling panes. "In L.A. now it's probably seventy degrees and when the kids wake up they can go straight out and play ball."

"After school," Josh corrected.

"Yeah," I said. "Whatever. But that's the reason your California and Arizona players dominate the big leagues."

"The Tigers suck," Josh said, and his brother glanced up to add his two cents. "They *really* suck," he said.

It was then that I became aware of the background noise, a thin droning mewl from beyond the windows as if someone were drowning kittens in the street. Philip heard it then, too, and the boys and Denise, and in the next moment we were all at the window. "Oh, shit," Philip hissed. "Not again. Not today, of all days."

"What?" I said. "What is it?" And then I saw, while my nephews melted away and Denise gritted her teeth and my brother swore: the zombies were out there at the edge of the lawn, a hundred of them at least. They were singing, locked arm in arm and swaying to the beat, stretched across the mouth of the driveway in a human chain.

Philip's face was drawn tight. He told Denise to call the police, and then he turned to me. "Now you're going to see something, little brother," he said. "Now you're going to see why I keep asking myself if I shouldn't just close down the clinic and let the lunatics take over the asylum."

The kitchen was gray, a weak played-out light pasted on every surface. Sleet rattled the windows and the conjoined voices mewled away in praise of mercy and forgiveness. I was about to ask him why he didn't do just that—close up and move someplace friendlier, someplace like California, for instance—but I already knew the answer. They could harass all the chalk-faced Sallys and thump all the Bibles they wanted, but my brother wasn't going to bow down to them—and neither was I. I knew whose team I was on and I knew what I had to do.

It took the police half an hour to show up. There were three squad cars and a bus with wire mesh over the windows, and the cops knew the routine. They'd been here before—how many times you could guess from the deadness in their eyes—and they'd arrested these very people, knew them by name. Philip and I waited in the house, watching the "Today" show at an uncomfortable volume, and the boys stayed in their room, already late for school. Finally, at quarter past eight, Philip and I shuffled out to the garage and climbed into the car. Philip's face was like an old paper sack with eyes poked in it. I watched him hit the remote for the garage door and watched the door lift slowly on the scene.

There they were, right there on the street, the whole bug-eyed crew from the

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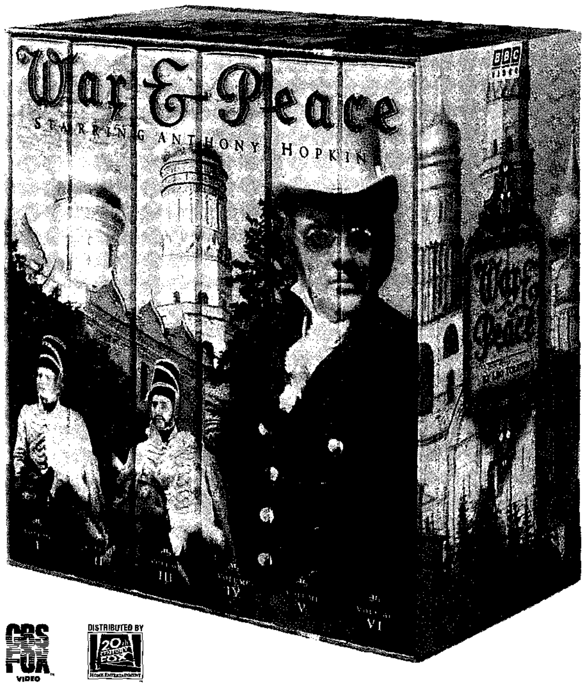

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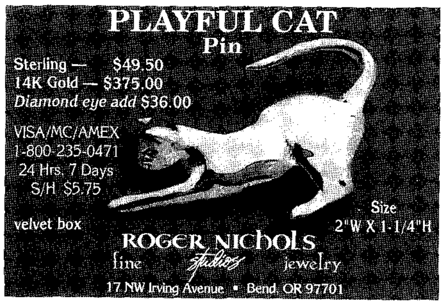

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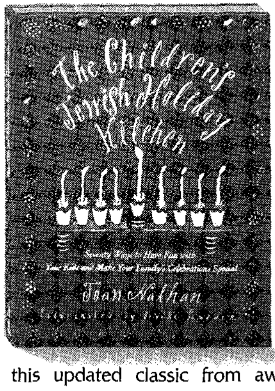
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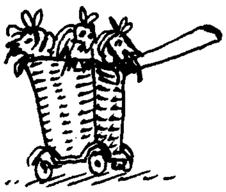
clinic, and ninety more. I saw squat, brooding mothers with babies, kids who should have been in school, old people who should have known better. They jerked their signs up and down and let out with a howl when the door cranked open, and though the cops had cleared them from the mouth of the drive they surged in now to fill the gap, the big Jesus-thumper with the beard right in front. The cops couldn't hold them back, and before we'd got halfway down the drive they were all over us, pounding on the windows and throwing themselves down in the path of the car. My brother, like a jerk, like the holy fool who automatically turns the other cheek, stepped on the brake.



"Run them over," I said, and all my breath was gone. "Run the fuckers over."

Philip just sat there, hanging his head in frustration. The cops peeled them away, one by one, zipped on the plastic cuffs and hauled them off, but for every one they lifted out of the way another dove in to take his place. We couldn't go forward, we couldn't back up. "Your neighbor kills babies!" they were shouting. "Dr. Beaudry is a murderer!" "Kill the butchers, not the babies!" I tried to stay calm, tried to think about rehab and jail and the larger problems of my life, but I couldn't. I couldn't take this. I couldn't.

Before I knew what I was doing I was out of the car. The first face I saw belonged to a kid of eighteen maybe, a tough guy with veins standing out in his neck and his leather jacket open to the sleet to show off a white T-shirt and a gold cross on a gold chain. He was right there, right in my face, shouting "Jesus! Jesus!" and he looked genuinely surprised when I pitched into him with everything I had and shoved him back into a pair of dumpy women in matching scarves and earmuffs. I went right for the next guy—a little toadstool who looked as if he'd been locked in a closet for the last forty years—and flung him away from the car. I heard shouts, saw the cops wading through the crowd, and then I was staring into the face of the big guy, the king yahoo himself—Mr. Beard—and he was so close I knew what he'd had for breakfast. In all that chaos he just stood there rigid at the bumper of the car, giving me a big rich phony Jesus-loving smile that was as full of hate as anything I'd ever seen, and then he ducked down on one knee and handcuffed himself to the bumper.

That put me over the line. I wanted to make a martyr out of him, wanted to kick him to death right there, right in the driveway and with the whole world looking on, and who knows what would have happened if Philip hadn't grabbed me from behind. "Rick!" he kept shouting. "Rick! Rick!" And then he wrestled me up the walk and into the house, Denise's scared white face in the door, the mob howling for blood and then lurching right into another weepy, churchy song as if they were in a cathedral somewhere.

In the safety of the hallway, the door closed and locked behind us, my brother turned on me. "Are you crazy?" he shouted, and you would have thought *I* was the enemy. "You want to go back to jail? You want lawsuits? What were you thinking, anyway—are you stoned on something, is that it?"

I looked away from him, but I wanted to kill him, too. It was beating in my veins, along with the Desoxyn I'd stolen from the clinic. I saw my nephews peeking out of their room down the hall. "You can't let these people push you around," I said.

"Look at me, Rick," he said. "Look at me."

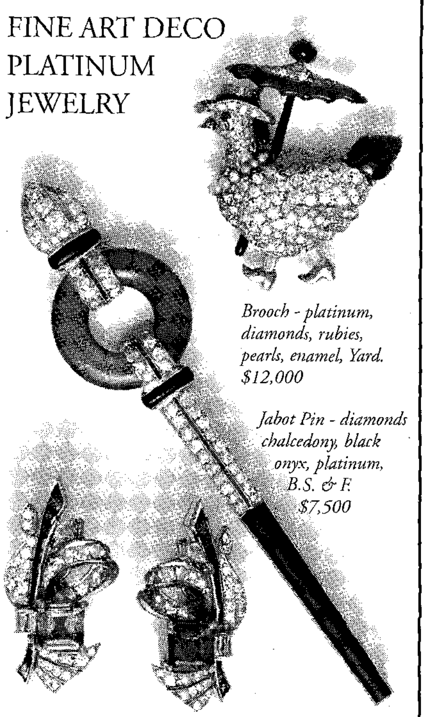
I was dodging around on my feet, tight with it, and I lifted my eyes grudgingly. I felt like a kid all over again, Rick the shoplifter, the pothead, the fuckup.

"You're just playing into their hands, don't you see that? They want to provoke you, they want you to go after them. Then they put you back in jail and they get the headlines." His voice broke. Denise tried to say something, but he shut her up with a wave of his hand. "You're back on the drugs, aren't you? What is it—cocaine? Pot? Something you lifted from the clinic?"

Outside I could hear them, "We Shall Overcome," and it was a cruel parody—this wasn't liberation, it was fascism. I said nothing.

"Listen, Rick, you're an ex-con and you've got to remember that, every step you take. I mean, what did you think, you were protecting me out there?"

"Ex-con?" I said, amazed. "Is that what you think of me? I can't believe you. I'm no ex-con. You're thinking of somebody in the movies, some documentary you saw



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on PBS. I'm a guy who made a mistake, a little mistake, and I never hurt anybody. I'm your brother, remember?"

That was when Denise chimed in. "Philip," she said, "come on, Philip. You're just upset. We're all upset."

"You keep out of this," he said, and he didn't even turn to look at her. He just kept his Aqua Velva eyes on me. "Yeah," he said finally, "you're my brother, but you're going to have to prove it to me."

I CAN see now the Desoxyn was a mistake. It was exactly the sort of thing they'd warned us about. But it wasn't coke and I just needed a lift, a buzz to work behind, and if he didn't want me to be tempted, then why had he left the key to the drug cabinet right there in the conch-shell ashtray on the corner of his desk? *Ex-con.* I was hurt and I was angry and I stayed in my room till Philip knocked at the door an hour later to tell me the police had cleared the mob away. We drove to work in silence, Philip's opera chewing away at my nerves like a hundred little sets of teeth.

Philip didn't notice it, but there was something different about me when I climbed back into that car, something nobody could notice unless they had X-ray vision. I was armed. Tucked inside the waistband of my gray Levi's, underneath the flap of my shirt where you couldn't see it, was the hard black stump of a gun I'd bought from a girl named Corinne at a time when I was feeling especially paranoiac. I had money lying around the apartment then and people coming and going—nobody desperate, nobody I didn't know or at least know through a friend—but it made me a little crazy. Corinne used to drop by once in a while with my roommate's girlfriend, and she sold me the thing—a .38 Special—for three hundred bucks. She didn't need it anymore, she said, and I didn't want to know what that meant, so I bought it and kept it under my pillow. I'd only fired it once, up a canyon in Tujunga, but it made me feel better just to have it around. I'd forgotten all about it, actually, but when I got my things out of storage and shipped them to Philip's house, there it was, hidden away in a box of CDs like some poisonous thing crouching under a rock.

What I was feeling is hard to explain. It had to do with Philip, sure—ex-con, that really hurt—and with Sally and the clinic

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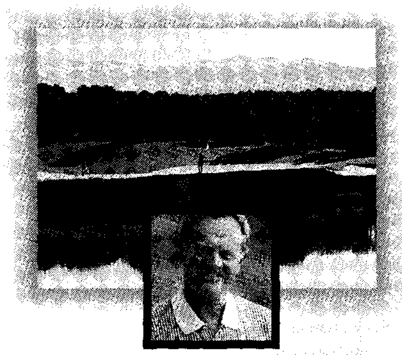

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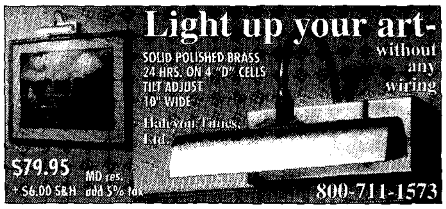

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and the whole Jesus-thumping circus. I didn't know what I was going to do—nothing, I hoped—but I knew I wasn't going to take any shit from anybody, and I knew Philip didn't have it in him to protect himself, let alone Denise and the kids and all the knocked-up grieving teen-age Sallys of the world. That was all. That was it. The extent of my thinking. I walked into the clinic that morning just as I had for the past week and a half, and nobody knew the difference.

I cleaned the toilets, washed the windows, took out the trash. Some blood work came back from an outside lab—we only did urine—and Fred showed me how to read the results. I discussed the baseball strike with Nurse Tsing and the prospects of an early spring with Nurse Hempfield. At noon I went out to a deli and had a meatball wedge, two beers, and a breath mint. I debated dialling Sally just once more—maybe she was home from school, headachy, nauseous, morning sickness, whatever, and I could get past the brick wall she'd put up between us and talk to her, really talk to her for the first time—but when I got inside the phone booth I just didn't feel like it. As I walked back to the clinic I was wondering if she had a boyfriend or if it was just one of those casual encounters, blind date, back seat of the car—or rape, even. Or incest. Her father's voice could have been the voice of a child abuser, easily—or who even knew if he was her father? Maybe he was the stepfather. Maybe he was a Humbert Humbert type. Maybe anything.

There were no protesters out front when I got back—they were all in jail—and that lightened my mood a bit. I even joked with Fred and caught myself whistling over my work. I forgot the morning, forgot the gun, forgot Pasadena and the life that was. Coffee kept me awake, coffee and Diet Coke, and I stayed away from the other stuff just to prove something to myself—and to Philip, too. For a while there I even began to suffer from the delusion that everything was going to work out.

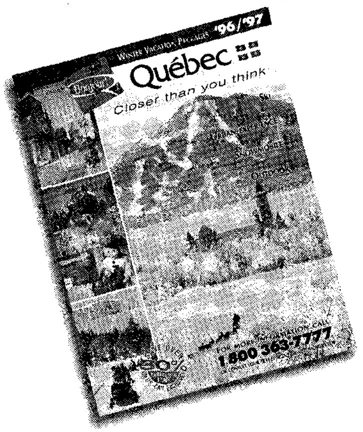
Then it was late, getting dark, and the day was almost done. I pictured the evening ahead—Denise's cooking, "Winnie-the-Pooh," my brother's Scotch, six windblown blocks to the store for a litre of Black Cat—and suddenly I felt like pulling out the gun and shooting myself right then and there. Uncle Rick, little brother, ex-con: who was I kidding? I would have been better off in jail.

I needed a cigarette. Badly. The need took me past the waiting room—four scared-looking women, one angry-looking man—through the lab, and into the back corner. The fluorescent lights hissed softly overhead. Fred was already gone. I stood at the window, staring into the nullity of the drawn blinds till the cigarette was a nub. My hands were trembling as I lit another from the butt end of the first, and I didn't think about the raw-looking leftovers in the stainless-steel trays that were like nothing so much as skinned frogs, and I didn't think about Sally or the fat-faced bearded son of a bitch shackling himself to the bumper, either. I tried hard to think nothing, to make it all a blank, and I was succeeding, I was, when for some reason—idle curiosity, boredom, fate—I separated two of the slats and peered out into the lot.

And there she was, just like that: Sally. Sally in her virginal parka and fluffy boots, locked in her mother's grip and fighting her way up the walk against a tide of chanting zombies—and I recognized them, too, every one of them, the very ones who'd been dragged away from my brother's door in the dark of the morning. Sally wasn't coming in for an exam—there weren't going to be any more exams. No, Sally meant business. You could see that in the set of her jaw and in the way she lowered her head and jabbed out her eyes like swords, and you could see it in every screaming line of her mother's screaming face.

The light was fading. The sky hung low, like smoke. And then, in that instant, as if some god had snapped his fingers, the street lights went on, a sudden artificial burst of illumination exploding in the sky above them. All at once I felt myself moving, the switch turned on in me, too, all the lights flaring in my head, burning bright, and I was out the door, up the corridor, and pushing through the double glass doors at the front entrance.

Something was blocking the doors—bodies, deadweight, the zombies piled up on the steps like corpses—and I had to force my way out. There were bodies everywhere, a minefield of flesh, people stretched out across the steps, obliterating the sidewalk and the curb in front of the clinic, immobilizing the cars in the street. I saw the punk from this morning, the teen-age tough guy in his leather jacket, his back right up against the door, and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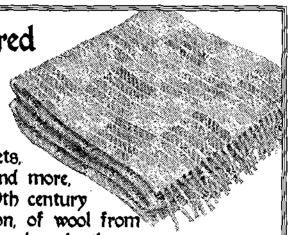

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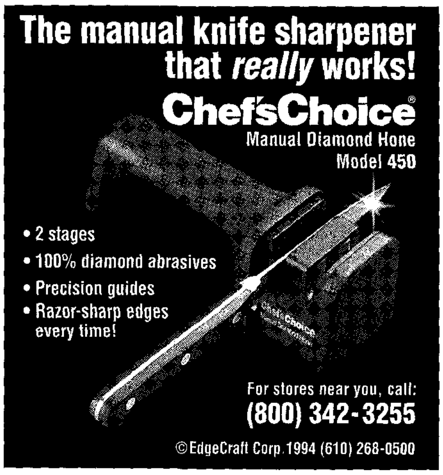

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beside him one of the dumpy women I'd flung him into. They didn't learn, these people, they didn't know. It was a game. A big joke. Call people baby-killers, sing about Jesus, pocketful of posies, and then the nice policeman carries you off to jail and Mommy and Daddy bail you out. I tried to kick them aside, lashing out with the steel toes of my boots till my breath was coming in gasps. "Sally!" I cried. "Sally, I'm coming!"

She was stalled at the corner of the building, standing rigid with her mother before the sea of bodies. "Jesus loves you!" somebody cried out and they all took it up till my voice was lost in the clamor, erased in the everlasting hiss of Jesus. "We're going to come looking for you, brother," the tough guy said then, looking up at me out of a pair of seething blue eyes. "You better watch your back."

Sally was there. Jesus was there. Hands grabbed at me, snaked round my legs till I couldn't move, till I was mired in flesh. The big man came out of nowhere, lithe on his feet, vaulting through the inert bodies like the shadow of something moving swiftly overhead, and he didn't so much as graze me as he went by. I was on the third step down, held fast, the voices chanting, the signs waving, and I turned to watch him handcuff himself to the door and flash me a tight little smile of triumph.

"Sally!" I shouted. "Sally!" But she was already turning around, already turning her back to me, already lost in the crowd.

I looked down at my feet. A woman was clutching my right leg to her as if she'd given birth to it, her eyes as loopy as any crackhead's. My left leg was in the grip of a balding guy who might have been a clerk in a hardware store and he was looking up at me like a toad I'd just squashed. "Jesus," they hissed. "Jesus!"

The light was burning in my head, and it was all I needed. I reached into my pants and pulled out the gun. I could have anointed any one of them, but the woman was first. I bent to her where she lay on the unyielding concrete of the steps and touched that snub-nose to her ear as tenderly as any man of healing. The noise of it shut down Jesus, shut him down cold. Into the silence, and it was the hardware man next. Then I swung round on Mr. Beard.

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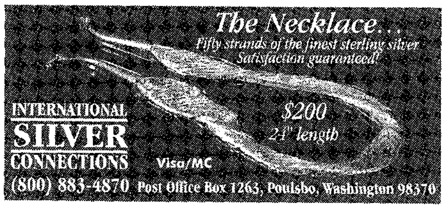

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Evita made herself, but what are we to make of her?

BY ALMA GUILLERMOPRIETO

WAS she really beautiful? What did she look like? It is possible to stare for hours at the photographs—never enough of them—in the recent crop of Evita books and find no answers. Soon we will know that she looked exactly like Madonna, but for the moment it is possible to say only that once she had become Evita her image was that of a different order of being—of a Virgin, perhaps, or a saint. A flickering apparition with attributes rather than features: the radiant impact of the gold-colored hair, something haunted about the eyes, the lingering sad ecstasy of the smile. The posters, the photographs, the blurred documentary footage all confirm it: she was not a person but an embodied gesture.

Not in the early photographs, though. Here she is, for example, in a picture reproduced in "Eva Perón," a new biography by Alicia Dujovne Ortiz (St. Martin's), which shows her in the days before her hairdresser discovered that history needed Evita to be a blonde. It is mid-1944, and, thanks in large part to certain skillfully wielded influences, the provincial actress Eva Duarte, possessed of an unreconstructed working-class accent and an unfailingly gauche manner, has obtained her first feature role, in a movie called "Circus Cavalcade." In the promo shot, brunette ringlets surround a pale, slightly thin-lipped face. The nose has a hint of the ski jump, but the eyes are large and their expression is pleasant. A big bow is strategically placed over what was a famously flat chest, but it does nothing to disguise her terrible posture. She projected no sexuality, and there is nothing in the photograph to indicate that Eva Duarte's public personality might have been memorable, either—an impression, or lack of one, confirmed by the kindest word that critics ever used to describe her acting: "discreet." There is nothing in the image, certainly, to suggest transcendence.

And yet the sense we have of Eva Duarte's destiny is so strong by now that it is almost impossible to believe that at the time the picture was taken she did not know, as we do, that this bland and to all appearances untalented girl, born illegitimate and on a ranch, was soon to become Evita. It would have been logical for anyone with more ordinary ambitions to think instead that 1944 was already the crowning year of her life: she had a movie role, a nice apartment filled with knickknacks, a modest degree of name recognition, and a new military lover—a very important one—with whom she was passionately, overwhelmingly involved.

Because the meeting between Eva Duarte, aspiring *radionovela* actress, and Juan Perón, putschist colonel, is the stuff of legend, it is impossible to be completely certain of anything about it, including the date and the circumstances of their first encounter. By most accounts, including Perón's, it took place on January 22, 1944, and the occasion was a benefit for earthquake victims, sponsored by a group of Army colonels who had overthrown the civilian government six months earlier. Eva Duarte, who had recently gone for months without acting in any of the radio soaps that were the mainstay of Argentine broadcasting, and who had in the past endured typically sordid casting-couch arrangements in order to get work, was working now, thanks to her new friend Lieutenant Colonel Aníbal Imbert, who was in charge of the Post and Telegraph Offices (and communications in general) for the new regime. Imbert had got her the starring role in a new radio series, based on the lives of famous women in history—Isadora Duncan, Elizabeth I, Mme. Chiang Kai-shek—but it was Eva alone who then, drawn to the populist rhetoric of the new regime and always looking for an opportunity to stand out, maneuvered herself into the position of spokeswoman for the Radio Association of Argentina, and into events like the earthquake benefit.

In "Eva Perón" Alicia Dujovne recounts the various versions of how Eva Duarte found herself that fateful evening in one of two empty seats on the platform, next to Imbert, who was waiting for his friend Juan Perón. (The most amusing story comes from the benefit's m.c., Roberto Galán, who claims that Eva stood beneath the stage, tugged on his pant leg, and said, "Galancito, darling, introduce me. I want to recite a poetry.") Dujovne sensibly speculates that instead it may have been Imbert himself—by that time heartily sick of Eva's anxious, clutching personality—who introduced her to Perón, at an earlier party. But in the brilliant novel "Santa Evita" (Knopf) Tomás Eloy Martínez recounts history as it should have been, and as it was told to him long ago in Madrid by an aging Juan Perón: Eva's heart belonged to Perón even before they met. It had become clear that the Colonel, who was in charge of labor relations, was emerging as the real authority in the new regime. He looked magnificent in uniform. His smile was benevolent and virile. His radio speeches had thrilled her. ("I am only a humble soldier who has been granted the honor of protecting the working masses of Argentina.") She was twenty-four, he forty-eight. On the platform, sitting next to Imbert, she turned her great dark eyes on Perón as he walked to his seat.

"Colonel."

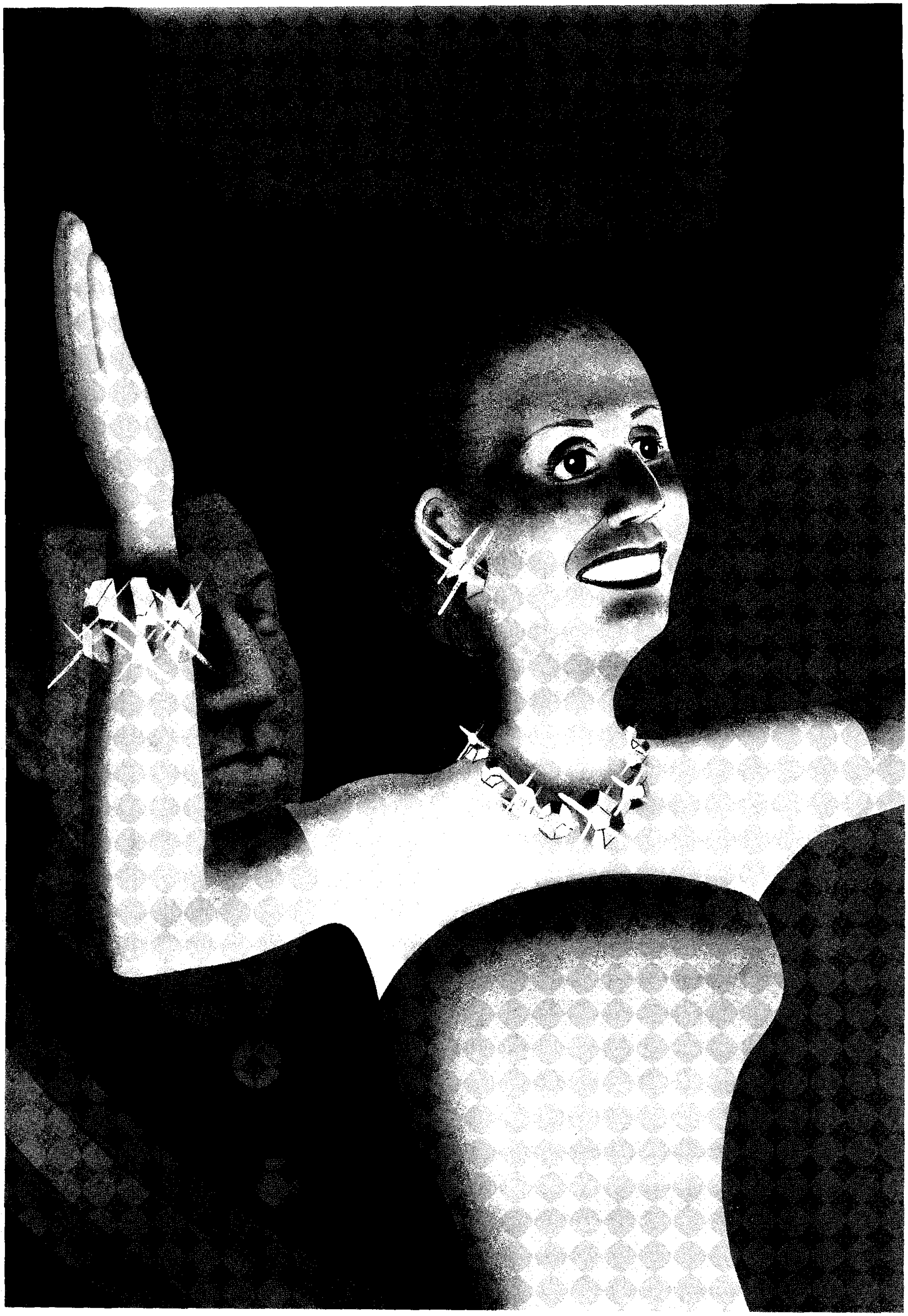
"What is it, my girl?"

"Thank you for existing."

She got his attention. Perón was ambitious but lazy, wily but aloof, and interested, as life would prove, in few things besides himself, politics in rela-

Eva Perón (opposite). "The poor like to see me beautiful," she said. "They don't want to be protected by a badly dressed old hag."

IAN FALCONER



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tion to himself, and his French poodles (and a fourteen-year-old mistress he took on after Eva's death, to whom he wrote fond letters about the French poodles). But Eva could force herself into his hitherto sterile emotional life because from their first meeting she offered herself up to Perón as his worshipper, and from that moment virtually until the instant of her death, eight years later, she did nothing in public or in private that was not in some way an act of devotion to him, an oblation of frankincense and myrrh. "*Mi vida por Perón!*" she cried a thousand times before the roaring crowds, and then she died. There are parallels that could be drawn between her life and the lives of other obsessively ambitious women who have forced their way out of poverty and to fame through the skillful and untiring manipulation of their own images—Madonna, let us say—but instead popular memory finds parallels between Evita's life and the lives of the saints, because she did it all for someone else.

In life, Evita was and wished to be only an instrument of Perón. (In death, she took on a life of her own, but we will come to that.) Toward the end, someone wrote an autobiography for her (she was barely literate), and it was called what she called Perón in all her speeches: "My Reason for Living." If anything, she was even more effusive about her husband in private. Joseph Page, in his excellent introduction to the English-language edition of a second text ghostwritten for Evita, this one as she was dying, called "In My Own Words" (New Press), quotes a letter she wrote Perón: "Tonight I want to leave you this perfume above all else so that you will know I adore you and if it is possible today more than ever because when I was suffering I felt your affection and goodness so much that until the last moment of my life I will offer [misspelled] it to you body and soul, since you know I am hopelessly in love with my dear old man." By most accounts, Perón was sexually indifferent. Dujovne assumes, without telling us why, that Eva Duarte was actually frigid. Yet there is no doubting the passionate and romantic nature of Eva's commitment to her husband. By a lucky accident of history, her passion was fuelled by precisely the same emotions that drove millions of Argentines to what Eva eventually baptized *la fe peronista*—the Peronist faith.

THE facts of Evita's early life coincide nicely with those of the poor she came to represent: she was, like so many others, born of a destitute woman who found it expedient, and possibly gratifying, to take a wealthy and powerful lover. (Juan Duarte was a landowner and small-town caudillo, or political boss, in a rural area about ninety miles west of Buenos Aires, and he was properly married. Juana Ibarguren was a woman he spent many nights with and was the mother of five of Duarte's children, of whom Eva María, born in 1919, was the youngest.) Like so many children born of these arrangements in a country where upper-class snobbery reaches extremes of refinement and viciousness, Eva was humiliated by her bastard status. (Juana Ibarguren and her children, who lived in a one-room house, were kept away from Juan Duarte's elegant funeral, but were allowed to say a quick farewell to the corpse at the wake.) Eva migrated on her own from the sticks to Buenos Aires at age fifteen, and, like so many of the expanding capital's other new residents, she looked for opportunity and found it lacking. She shared with her class a gnawing, all-encompassing resentment that was the precise counterpart of the seething contempt the ruling class cultivated for the plebes. Most important, neither she nor her fellow-poor were inclined to be fatalistic. The Argentina that Eva Duarte grew up in was a nation of recent immigrants—Italian anarchist farmers, Spanish socialist shopkeepers, conservative German merchants—who had brought their politics with them when they migrated, and who firmly believed that they deserved the better life they were willing to work so hard for.

Perón—himself born out of wedlock, and pursuing upward mobility through an Army career—was their catalyst. He was a cynical politician who systematically played off his followers against one another, often with tragic results, and his authoritarian approach to government probably grew out of his intense admiration for Franco and Mussolini. It may well be the case that he (and Eva) provided shelter for Nazis fleeing Europe after the Axis collapse, in exchange for a significant part of the Third Reich's treasure—Dujovne works hard to try to prove it in her biography—but generations of Argentines have remained impervious to these accusations, because of what Perón gave them: a political movement that legitimated and ennobled the working poor, and a decisive restructuring of the state that—by nationalizing key resources, establishing generous social-welfare programs, and institutionalizing a crony relationship between organized labor and the government—transformed Argentina from a sugar daddy for the rich into a sugar daddy for the poor. Perón was only one of several upstart colonels when Evita thanked him for existing, and his speeches did not then, or ever, reveal the kind of substantial political thinking that gets translated into lasting programs or gets used to interpret reality in other parts of the world, but he cannot simply be written off as a demagogue. He had a vision of a free Argentina: a nation that under his *verticalista* guidance would steer clear of both sides in the Cold War, and in which law and order would prevail, government would be responsive to the needs of its citizens, and workers would get the respect their efforts deserved. In that sense, he was revolutionary, and Eva Duarte, like millions of others, responded instantly to his appeal. As for his aloof, diffident personality (he liked to describe himself as "a herbivorous lion"), it, too, was a virtue, for it turned him into an empty vessel that Evita could fill with her faith.

Eva Duarte's role in history was determined within months of her first encounter with the Colonel. One day, she was a source of hilarity for upper-class women, who made a point of tuning in to her "Famous Women" broadcasts. ("What a daily pleasure, this nasal voice who played [Catherine of Russia] with rural tango accents!" one said.) The next, she had secured her movie role in "Circus Cavalcade," because she was already the established mistress of Juan Perón, a man not known for passion, who had nevertheless rented an apartment in Eva's building so that he could be near her without violating the moral code. His new lover was not easy or pleasant to live with—she threw tan-

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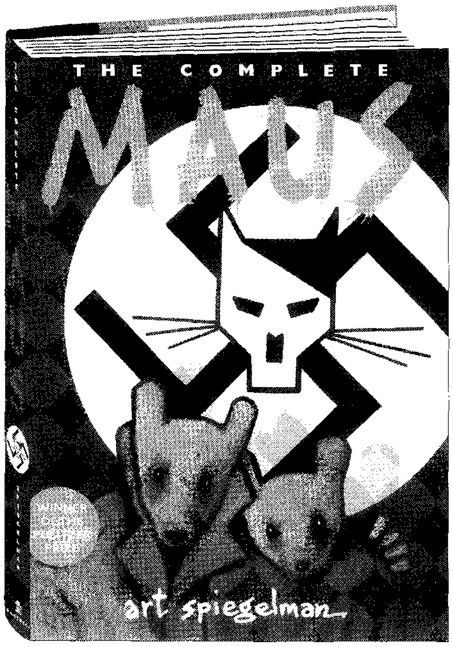

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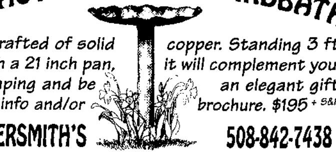

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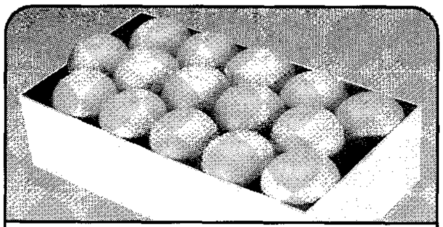

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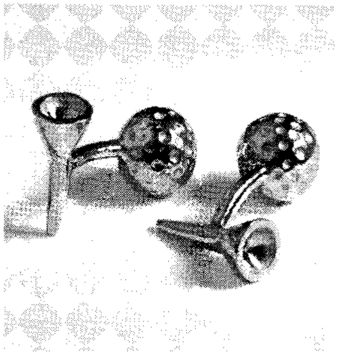

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trums, demanded in public that he marry her, and soon displayed her contempt for all but his most slavishly devoted political associates—yet despite these defects she was the perfect woman for him, because she pushed him beyond his own apathy. Within weeks, Perón had taken the measure of her political genius, and he sent her out on the hustings. He looked on approvingly as she forged her new public persona. Dujovne, whose insightful biography is marred by the lack of sources for material that is often controversial, and by an irritating Argentine penchant for psychobabble, is invaluable when she is narrating Evita's act of self-creation.

The clothes changed first, in 1945. Dujovne cites a recollection of Francisco Jamandreu, designer to the stars:

> "Do not think of me the way you think of your other clients," Eva would tell him. "From now on, I will have a dual personality. On the one side, I am the actress to whom you can give poufs, lamé, feathers, sequins. On the other, I am what the Big Shot wants me to be, a political figure. On May 1, I must accompany him to a demonstration. People will gossip, it will be the first appearance of the Duarte-Perón couple. What will you create for the occasion?"

Jamandreu settled on a double-breasted houndstooth suit with a velvet collar, so elegant and practical that even Eva Duarte could be taken seriously while sheathed in it.

Then came the hair. The first photograph of Eva as a blonde appeared in a magazine on June 1st of that same year. Dujovne writes:

> Since hair dyes had not yet been perfected, the color's ambition was, in fact, not to appear natural. It was a theatrical and symbolic gold, a gold that imitated the effect of the golden halos and backgrounds of the religious paintings of the Middle Ages. . . . From then on, she would polish and refine her personality by gradually eliminating all excessive ornaments: first the banana earrings, then the flowered dresses.

She wore the new look when she was stumping for Perón during the following months, and probably during the third week of October, 1945—a week that decided the Colonel's destiny. The other colonels who had overthrown the civilian government with him were now enraged by, among other things, his increasing prominence, his populist tendencies, and his impertinent mistress. They put him under arrest on October 13th. There was a significant degree of support for the move, and Eva herself was mauled that day by middle-class university students. But on October 17th Perón's working-class followers descended on Buenos Aires from every part of the country, in numbers that even the wily Colonel could not have expected. Whether they were organized by Evita remains a matter of debate. (The evidence indicates that they were not, but this is a conclusion that Peronists and anti-Peronists alike consider a heresy.) What is certain is that Perón himself did little except sit quietly in a room of the military hospital where he was being kept prisoner, considering whether he should marry Eva and get out of politics altogether. In short order, though, his enemies decided that the only thing to do in the face of the tumult was to release him and call for elections. These Perón won handily, with the constant help of the woman who was now known as Eva Duarte de Perón, because shortly after his October triumph, *el conductor*, as he was now called, had at last married her. In exchange for his vow, she gave up her acting career.

If this were a story about a man, no one would be asking what color suit he wore to the Inauguration, but this is a story about a Latin woman of the nineteen-forties who was obsessively interested in clothing, jewelry, and self-presentation and was also uncannily perceptive about what the people she wanted to address looked for in her. "The poor like to see me beautiful: they don't want to be protected by a badly dressed old hag." The transformation of Eva Duarte was almost complete, but mistakes were still being made. After Perón took power, he dispatched the First Lady on a goodwill tour of Europe, and she sent a ripple of delighted horror through Paris society by appearing at a reception in her honor in a strapless gold-lamé evening outfit worthy of a cocotte. But she returned to Buenos Aires with a full and judicious wardrobe on order from Christian Dior, and eventually her confessor, Father Hernán Benítez, prevailed on her to sacrifice all makeup except lipstick. As Dujovne points out, the effect of this act of contrition was to make her timelessly fashionable. Then the same hairdresser who had made her blond pulled her hair tightly back from her pale, broad forehead, wove a braid, and bound it in a shimmering knot at the nape of her neck. And, finally, Eva María Duarte de Perón adjusted her name. It is unusual in Latin America for a woman to be known only by her husband's name, but she wanted to be called Eva Perón, a Perón in her own right. She had pared herself down to the essentials, and she had become one of the most powerful women in Argentina and in the world.

Evita did not live on in memory because of the way she looked but because she looked beautiful, bejewelled, and radiant while consuming herself in a flame of devotion to her husband and the poor. The dramatic change in her appearance has historical significance, and Dujovne does a fine job of linking Evita's outward changes to the development of her personality, but all the author's laborious research cannot account for the essential transformation of Eva Perón: from a pushy, selfish twenty-six-year-old starlet (her age when Juan Perón first came to power) to a flagellant compelled to take on the suffering of an entire nation and make it her own. Was Evita really still Eva Duarte after she managed to give the slip to that telltale accent, and was she more sincere when she insinuated to a society lady that she would love the woman's diamond necklace as a present or when she gave her jewels away to the poor? Was the suffering mother of all Argentines the same as the ruthless politician? If she wasn't, then who died? (Some, of course, think she is still alive; the possibility of her reincarnation is a rumor that flares periodically through Argentina.) It is, at any rate, as difficult for those who believe that her spirit lives to describe her as it is for those who knew and loathed her in the flesh: She was grasping, shrewish, and so calculating that she orchestrated her acts of charity to distract attention from all the money she and her husband salted away in Switzerland. Or else she underwent a spiritual conversion when she met Perón which allowed her to channel the voice of the working masses. But it may be that she underwent a spiritual conversion and remained grasping, shrewish, et cetera. And also ignorant. If Perón had few ideas about how to use his country's wealth to generate real national prosperity, or how to create a true body politic, Eva, with her youth, her sixth-grade rural education, and her recent frivolous past, had none. She did what she could with the irresistible possibility that was granted her to do good, while living out a fantasy that dated back to the days when she left her home town for the capital, impelled by the dream of becoming like her idol, Norma Shearer in the role of Marie Antoinette.

The Peronist myth is that she and the poor identified with each other because Eva, too, had been poor. But one can wonder if it was perhaps that the poor identified with her rage and fed it, in turn, with their love, and whether it was the unbearable tension at the crux of these emotions that led her to die. Eva Perón died, in 1952, of uterine cancer, because she had refused to have an operation when the disease was first diagnosed, in 1950. She didn't have time, she said. She was too busy rallying recalcitrant politicians to support the Peronist reforms, lobbying Perón himself to push a women's-voting-rights act through Congress, and extolling Perón across the country in speeches whose flavor had not a little of the lachrymose *radionovela* actress she once was ("I come from the people; this red heart that bleeds and cries and covers itself with roses when it sings") but whose intensity was overwhelming.

All this she did in her spare time. Juan Perón, after taking office, slept calmly through his nights and lived an orderly existence, presiding over the government as it is a man's business to do. His wife worked through the evenings, slept little, and in the morning—tailored, perfumed, and decked out in diamonds—set out for the Labor Ministry, where she had a suite of offices but no official position. (Eva never would have a government job.) In the ministry's Great Hall, *los pobres* ("*mis pobres*") were already waiting. The same scene was staged day after day: a line of supplicants, among them the lame, the halt, the destitute; a flock of anxious minions armed with notepads; and behind the vast desk, radiant and ever gracious, the Lady Eva. Did an old crone need dentures? Done. Did a

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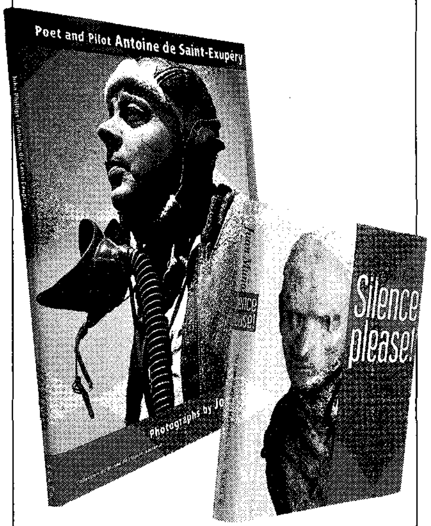

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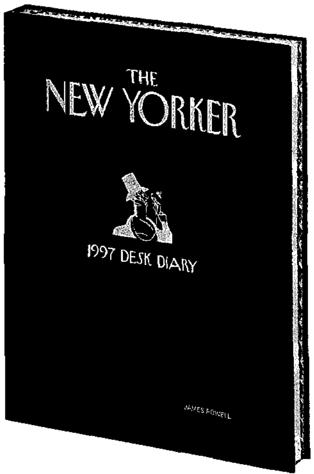

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timorous couple come to beg for wedding garments? *Hecho.* When the money ran out, she unfastened a diamond clip and handed it over. Perón had a horror of physical contact. Evita kissed lepers. She also took lice-infested urchins to the official residence for a rest cure and bathed them herself; started a union for domestic workers; and set up hospitals, children's homes, and a home for girls who travelled to the big city and found themselves penniless, as she once had.

Joseph Page writes that, even as Eva's health declined, the Eva Perón Foundation—a conduit set up by Evita for her multiple social works—grew into a "gigantic enterprise dominating virtually all public as well as private charitable activity and extending into the fields of education and health." Dujovne, noting that no charge of corruption against the foundation has ever been substantiated, imaginatively counters another charge: that its institutions—the provincial girls' home, for example, in which each floor was decorated in a different style (*provinciano*, fake English, faux Louis XV)—were merely lavish charity. The "fundamental idea that Evita hammered into the heads of the humiliated and the downtrodden" by practically forcing them to sleep in beds with embroidered sheets, Dujovne writes, was that they deserved such beds.

From the third year of Perón's first Presidential term, Eva was dying, and death's proximity made her more vehement. All the fame and glory she had accumulated had done nothing to appease her fundamental resentment. She saw enemies everywhere. She acquired some newspapers and closed down others she couldn't control. She flew into rages in closed Senate sessions and saw to it that government officials who were anything less than obsequious lost their jobs. She fought hard to persuade her husband that the leaders of a conspiracy against him should be shot. (He refused.) In the ghostwritten "In My Own Words," someone wrote words very like her own: "Those who speak of sweetness and of love forget that Christ said, 'I have come to bring fire over the earth and what I most want is that it burn!' " and "Fanaticism turns life into a permanent and heroic process of dying; but it is the only way that life can defeat death."

Perhaps she did consciously decide to die so that she might live. When her health broke down completely and she was forced to agree to an operation, it was too late. Even as she entered the last stages of the disease, though, she was changing. Perón was suddenly less important than the cause, and, despite having said so many times "I am nothing," she now desperately wanted the Vice-Presidential slot on the ticket for Perón's reëlection. Nevertheless, when a surging, beseeching multitude—probably the largest gathering in Argentina's history—asked that she join her husband on the ticket, at an electrifying public meeting on August 22, 1951, Perón vetoed her candidacy. He probably sensed that the woman he had always described as his invention was about to break free of his influence, and yet once more Eva obeyed him. Even though she had less than a year to live, it was far too late for her jealous husband to expunge her name. All Argentina knew her no longer as Eva Perón but as Evita only. It was one name, like a saint's, but in the diminutive, like that of someone fragile whom people hold dear. She was weakening visibly. She weighed eighty pounds.

Her last act of will involved yet another manipulation of her own body: in order to attend Perón's second Inauguration when she was already too weak to stand, she had a plaster support made in which she was encased, upright, during the open-car ride, the device covered by a long fur coat. (It may have included an arm prop, for she waved to the crowd the whole way.) On July 26, 1952, while tens of thousands of her distraught worshippers knelt and prayed that she might live, Evita died. She was thirty-three.

Three years later, the life gone from his movement, Juan Perón was overthrown. The herbivorous lion lacked the will to arm the workers with the machine guns and automatic pistols that Evita had bought from Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands for just such an occasion. Instead, Perón left quietly, bound for his long, comfortable exile in Franco's Spain.

THE following is all true, supported by recorded fact and presented almost straightforwardly in "Santa Evita," Tomás Eloy Martínez's fictional chronicle of Eva Perón's af-

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terlife: A Spanish embalmer, commissioned by Perón even before Evita's death, transformed her corpse into a radiant effigy. (Ever conscious of her image, Evita on her deathbed requested a post-mortem manicure, to change the color of her nail varnish from red to natural.) Peronists worshipped this figure until Perón was overthrown, in 1955, when right-wing military officers snatched the body away. And, according to the book, the embalmer had already made several copies of the body, which for the next fifteen years were part of a shell game played out in Argentina and in Europe. The generals who overthrew Perón found it unchristian to discard the real body, but they feared its power to stir multitudes against them, so, Martínez writes, the copies were deployed around Argentina until a safe, anonymous burial ground could be found for Evita's corpse. At one point, it was entrusted to an Army major, and he put it in his armoire. One evening, he heard steps approaching in the dark and fired his gun lethally at the intruder. The victim turned out to be his pregnant wife. The chief of operations for the abduction of the corpse went mad with the body in his care. Every time he transferred Evita to a new hiding place, flowers and lighted candles appeared there. He watched over her so obsessively that he was finally removed to an insane asylum by his alarmed superiors, and in the late fifties they got the body to Italy and into a funeral plot in a Milanese cemetery, under an assumed name.

In 1971, Perón was living in Madrid with his new wife, Isabelita, a former cabaret dancer with an incongruous schoolmarmish air, and with her private sorcerer, José López Rega. As part of a peace overture to the deposed leader, whose movement continued to flourish in his homeland even as the very mention of his name was forbidden, the military returned to him Evita's battered corpse. Isabelita combed its hair, the original embalmer restored it, and Perón put it in his attic. It appears to be true—at least, reliable sources claim that it is, and in "Santa Evita" Martínez makes it impossible to believe that it could not have been—that López Rega then staged a ceremony in which Isabelita lay on top of the coffin while he tried to transmigrate the soul of the deceased Mrs. Perón into the living one.

In the end, Evita—so desperate not to be forgotten, so unaware of how impossible that would prove—didn't get a mausoleum she had wanted and had helped design, which was to be the size of Napoleon's tomb. (We know, however, that she got the equivalent: her operatic life was turned into the rock opera that is soon to be a major motion picture.) By the time of Perón's official return to Argentina from his Spanish exile, in 1973, he was ambivalent about Eva's fame, if not downright resentful of her, and wary of her Evitista followers, who had taken to chanting at mass rallies that if Evita lived, she would be a guerrilla, and were about to go underground themselves. He did not bring the long-wandering body home with him.

The leftist Peronist guerrillas' arch-enemy would be the fiendish warlock López Rega, whom Perón appointed Minister of Social Welfare, and who from that position set up the first of the organized death squads that would eventually undermine Argentina. Perón ruled with Isabelita occupying the Vice-Presidency he had once denied Eva, and she succeeded him upon his death, in 1974. Isabelita immediately had Evita flown back from Spain so that Evita and Perón could lie in state side by side. But Perón had not wanted to be buried with Eva. (He never called her Evita.) He was placed in the Perón family crypt, where, in 1987, vandals broke open the tomb in order to saw off his hands.

Eva's still luminous corpse was taken to the Duarte family crypt, in Buenos Aires' fashionable Recoleta Cemetery. Having survived the array of indignities inflicted upon it, it has been allowed to lie in peace for nearly twenty years. Beyond Argentina, however, Evita's life has evidently just begun. It is not the same Eva Perón who coursed so tenaciously through her country's history that the world craves, but it is Evita all the same: heroic and fragile, grasping and motherly, parthenogenetic—like all real heroines—but in the service of a man, rebellious but condemned by fate, angry but submissive to that fate. A shimmering figure that comes in and out of focus endlessly in order to allow us the hypnotic speculation that all true stars elicit: What did she really look like? Could she have looked like me? ♦

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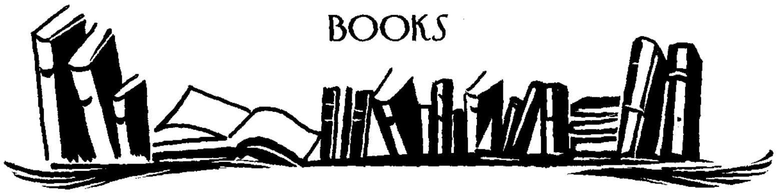

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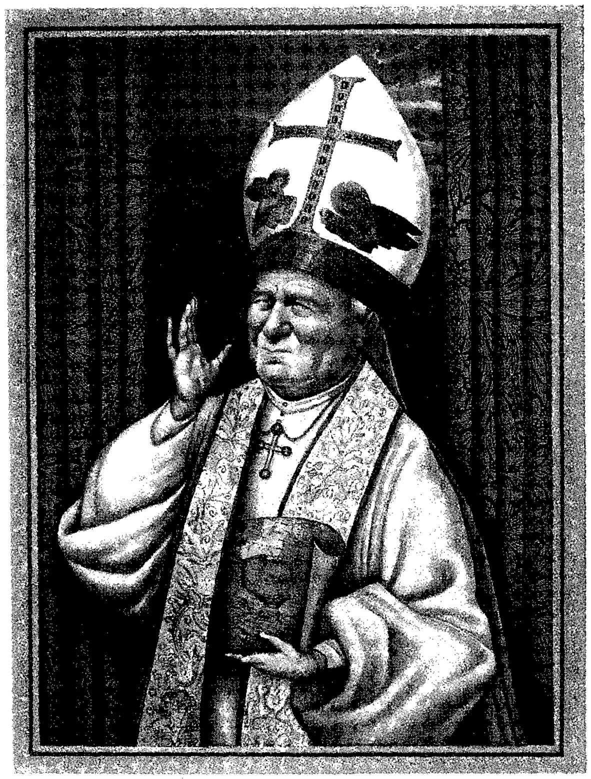

John Paul II: What did he do in the Cold War?

ANITA KUNZ

In 1992, *Time* ran a cover story entitled "The Holy Alliance" and written by Carl Bernstein. It claimed that the Soviet regime in Poland had been brought down, three years earlier, by a "clandestine campaign" undertaken by President Reagan and Pope John Paul II. As a result of action orchestrated by the C.I.A.'s William Casey, Bernstein claimed, "the communist government of Poland bowed to the moral, economic and political pressure imposed by the Pope and the President." If the story was true, the Pope had violated his own rules against priests' participating directly in politics, so perhaps it was not surprising that a Vatican spokesman denied the story. What was surprising, perhaps, was the disbelief in such a plot voiced by Solidarity members in Poland.

Still, the story must have seemed too good to give up on. It had everything but sex: spies in the Vatican, the Pope as a mitred Machiavelli, the C.I.A. chief deploying a "Catholic team" in Reagan's Administration (Secretary of State Alexander Haig; the White House security advisers Richard Allen and William Clark; the Ambassador-at-Large Vernon Walters; and the Vatican Ambassador, William Wilson), church and state coöperating to save the Catholic Church from the Polish state, bishops riding to the rescue of the imprisoned Solidarity leader, Lech Walesa, labor movements in the United States becoming pawns of the papal-Presidential strategists. No wonder some marketing genius at Doubleday decided to join this story with an otherwise sober and unsensational biography of the Pope, entitled "His Holiness" (Doubleday; $27.50) and written in part by Carl Bernstein but mainly by Marco Politi, a journalist who covers the Vatican for *La Repubblica*. The result is a two-headed book, one head only slightly connected to the body and babbling the *Time* story again, while the other head quietly brings up aspects of the Pope's life not in accord with William Casey's faith in clandestine plots.

Rather shamefacedly, Politi told Peter Steinfels, of the *Times*, that the story of the "secret campaign" was toned down in the book. But it isn't toned down by much, and Bernstein reinflated his claims on the "Larry King" show while

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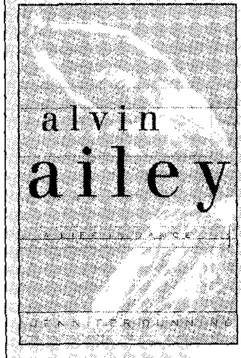

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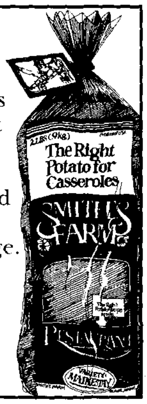

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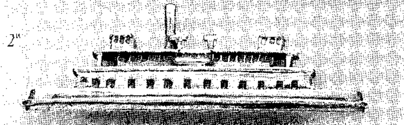

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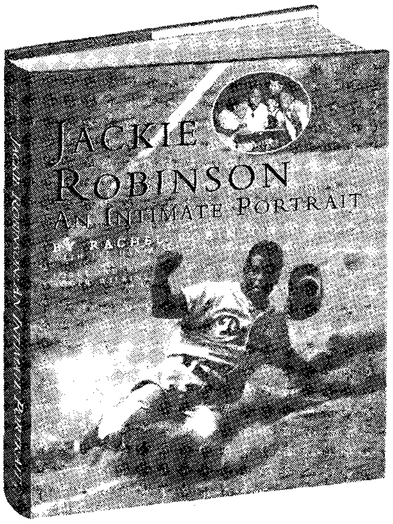

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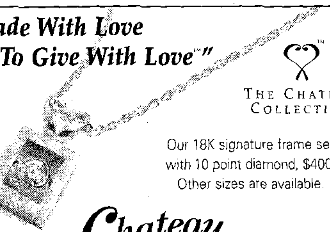

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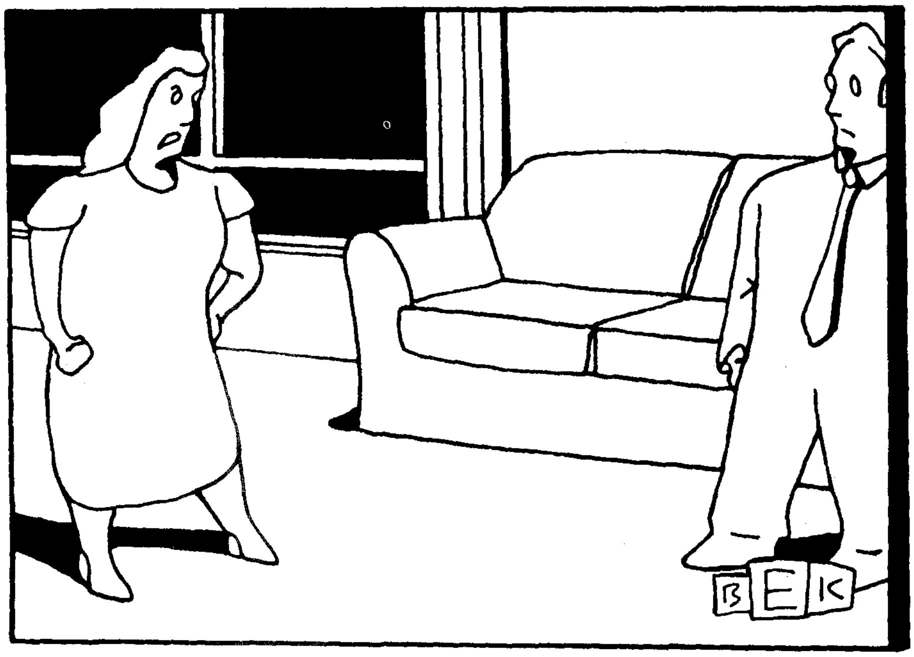
plugging the book. The interval between the magazine article and the book's appearance did not produce any convincing evidence for Bernstein's assertions. Bernstein tells us in the book that Casey met with the Pope perhaps half a dozen times, as if that were enough to prove there was a secret campaign. But what were the concrete results? "His Holiness" states that Casey "briefed" the Pope on America's reaction to the Polish situation—told him that America was helping the labor movement Solidarity, though not exactly how. But since we are also told that Casey thought the Pope had extensive intelligence about conditions in Poland, he presumably already knew of President Reagan's support for Solidarity. In fact, it was not a secret at all. Nor is there reason to think that the Pope provided the United States with much useful intelligence. At the time when information would have been most helpful to the United States—the time when General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the Communist leader in Poland, suddenly imposed martial law—the Vatican was, the authors emphasize, entirely in the dark.

Bernstein suggests that Casey and the Pope were actively working to bring down Jaruzelski. But other parts of this schizophrenic book make it clear that the Pope was urging moderation on Walesa and had struck up quite a cozy relationship with Jaruzelski. The truth seems to be that the Pope wanted peace in Poland, not the overthrow of Communism. And that was in accord with his entire record of political quietism—his defense of spiritual values as the really important ones. For all the ballyhoo about a Washington-Rome connection, it is impossible to find a single general policy or specific act—on the part of the Vatican or of the United States—that would have been any different if Casey had never met with the Pope.

There is a little more, but very little, to be said for that connection with regard to Central America. Vernon Walters, who was as articulate in several languages as Casey was inarticulate in his own, met with the Pope seven or eight times to explain American actions in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Walters was an alarmist about the threat of Communism, and connected it with the liberation theology that was, he believed, "rampant" in the region. He told the Pope, "In El Salvador we have only fifty military security personnel; the Soviets have over three hundred in Peru alone—more than the U.S. has in all of Latin America, excluding the base in Panama." But, as the authors of "His Holiness" point out, "he did not tell the pope that even as they spoke, the administration was training a force of 'Somozistas'—the Contras—in Argentina or that many more American advisers were headed for El Salvador and Honduras." When the Pope went to Latin America in 1983, he rebuked the dissident priests who opposed despotic (but anti-Communist) regimes. As you might expect, the book implies that this rebuke was a result of the close relationship Reagan's Administration had established with John Paul. After the Walters meeting, Bernstein and Politi write, "the American formula that Vernon Walters had outlined to Wojtyla for dealing with such regimes—encouraging a transition to democracy while seeking to block leftist forces aligned with Cuba or the U.S.S.R.—was now the Vatican policy as well." Note that "now," as if the Pope's policy had been different before. American alarm at liberation theology probably confirmed his own suspicions and comforted him in the course he was pursuing, but it's clear that papal policy would have been no different if Walters had stayed in Washington. In fact, the Pope's willingness to live with authoritarian regimes is one of the most notable things about him, and his opposition to priests in politics has deep roots in his own life.

WHEN Poland was under Nazi occupation, Wojtyla, then a student and worker, did nothing to resist the foreign regime, or even to help Jews escape from it—though some of his friends and mentors did. He thought that it was the task of Christians to suffer and seek holiness, in order to make God better disposed to use Poland for the world's spiritual redemption. During and after the war, he sought to enter a contemplative monastery of Carmelites, withdrawing from the world entirely. But his pastor, Archbishop Adam Stefan Sapieha, blocked these efforts, on the ground that Wojtyla's charismatic personality would be more useful in the active Church. (In later life, Wojtyla has worn a Carmelite scapular under his shirt.) Though he was,



"I'm only flesh and blood. And, of course, collagen."

• •

as a student, thwarted in his desire to be a Carmelite, he did the next best thing by joining the secret organization of a lay mystic, Jan Tyranowski, who recruited a select band to be a "living rosary" of young men devoting themselves to intense spirituality and self-improvement. Wojtyla's enthusiasm for this secret spiritual organization may help account for his patronage of Opus Dei, a band of (predominantly) laypeople, a subject the authors give distinctly short shrift. (In fact, the book mentions Opus Dei only once, though this conservative and secretive organization, founded in Spain during the nineteen-twenties, has been one of Pope John Paul II's most favored groups within the Church.)

Wojtyla's quietism under the Nazis was repeated under the Communists, and in 1958 Moscow approved his appointment as Bishop of Kraków. The Kremlin felt sure he would be more cooperative than Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the crusty primate of Poland. It is true that Wojtyla did deeply disturb the Soviets later, when he became Pope, but that was less because of his own actions than because of the pride his election gave Polish Catholics, stiffening the independence they had already exhibited. During his visits to Poland after he became Pope, he said nothing that would encourage people to overthrow the regime, and—directly and through intermediaries—urged Polish Catholics to refrain from violence. At one point, the proud old primate Cardinal Wyszyński even knelt before Walesa, imploring him not to press General Jaruzelski toward harsh reprisals. When martial law was finally imposed, the Pope went on Vatican Radio to say, "Polish blood must no longer be spilled," and his own emissary, Archbishop Luigi Poggi, appeared with General Jaruzelski on Polish TV. As Bernstein and Politi themselves note, the implication of a papal blessing "was all too obvious."

The Pope's moderating role makes unlikely the widespread theory—provisionally endorsed in "His Holiness"—that the Soviets were involved in Mehmet Ali Agca's 1981 assassination attempt on the Pope. John Paul II himself has not accepted the conspiracy theory; he visited the imprisoned Agca, treating him as a sick soul. Admittedly, this might be just a reflection of his desire to avoid international trouble. But his own moderating role was something that the Kremlin had to know about—from the Soviet Ambassador's regular dealings with Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, from Jaruzelski, and from many other sources. Indeed, it was public knowledge. As a conciliating influence, the Pope was more

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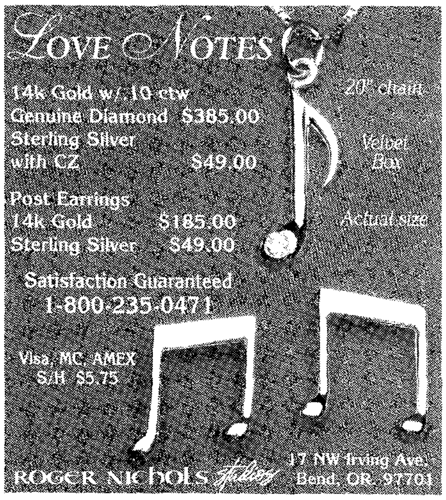
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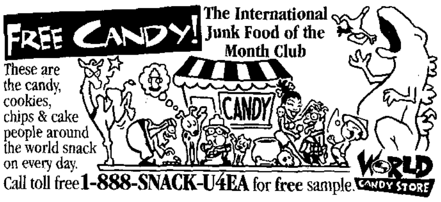
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Why, then, do Bernstein and Politi give a tentative nod to the idea that the Soviet rulers were behind Agca? For one thing, it supports the thesis that the Pope, in cahoots with America, was bringing down Jaruzelski. For another, Casey himself was sure that Communists were behind the assassination attempt; the freelance journalist Claire Sterling, Casey thought, had the goods on them. There were other Sterling fans in the Reagan Administration. Secretary of State Haig had read the galleys of her 1981 book, "The Terror Network," before it appeared; he repeated her allegations in a press conference, so she was able to use his comments in the finished book. Nor was that the only circular development in Sterling's relations with the Reagan Administration. When Casey's C.I.A. analysts could come up with no solid evidence for Sterling's theories of terrorism, Casey said of their report, "Read Claire Sterling's book and forget this mush. I paid $13.95 for this and it told me more than you bastards whom I pay fifty thousand dollars a year." Actually, some of what Casey found in the $13.95 book came from the fifty-thousand-dollar-a-year men. Her material on Italian terrorists contained "disinformation" produced by C.I.A. tricksters for Soviet consumption. They never dreamed that it would "blow back" for home consumption, to deceive their own boss and the Secretary of State. Bob Woodward, who tells this story in his 1987 book, "Veil," traces the circle "from CIA propaganda to Sterling's book galleys, to Haig's reading of the galleys, to Haig's press conference, then Haig's comments picked up in the New York *Times* article by Sterling, then finally in Sterling's book." Bernstein and Politi refer to this episode only in a brief footnote: "Some of the book's assertions, apparently unknown to Sterling, were based on CIA disinformation." Otherwise, they support Casey's credulity concerning her work.

POLITI seems principally responsible for later and stronger parts of the book. He is clearly sympathetic to the Pope's form of spirituality, but he is keenly aware of its limitations. As part of a church under hostile rule first by the Nazis and then by the Communists, Wojtyla felt that the only Christian form of resistance was complete fidelity to the Church in its nonpolitical aspect—the Church of prayer and of sacredness, the kind of Church he felt he could serve best in a Carmelite monastery. The Polish Church was conservative, and its separation from other churches by the Iron Curtain had left it largely untouched by modern theological developments. Wojtyla was shocked when he attended Vatican Council II, in 1962, to hear clergy criticizing aspects of the Church; such irreverence was something he would do his best to prevent when he was given the top post in Rome.

Nothing in modern culture has changed more drastically than the status of women, and there is no change that John Paul II has resisted more strenuously. In the Poland of Wojtyla's youth, the greatest popular devotion was to the Virgin Mary, and especially to the icon at Częstochowa, in southern Poland. Wojtyla's mother, Emilia, died when he was eight. (His only sister had died six years before he was born.) An older brother was off at medical school for much of Karol's childhood, so he and his pious father lived alone, keeping alive the cult of Emilia and of the Virgin. He still, as Pope, has high and ethereal notions of womanly purity—notions kept entirely apart from the practical conditions of women's lives in the modern world.

Starting from such old-fashioned, if not retrograde, attitudes toward women, he has dug in his heels all the more fiercely as women have acquired a dignity previously denied them in all history. No change could touch society at a more intimate nexus—affecting the relations of husbands to wives, children to mothers, brothers to sisters—and none is less reversible: little girls growing up now with the promise of education, professional careers, and equal political rights will not revert to the situation of their grandmothers. You may think this a great moral breakthrough in terms of personal worth, but the Pope, whose philosophical work as a bishop was on personhood, thinks it a great moral breakdown. When Nafis Sadik, the Under-Secretary of the 1994 United Nations Conference on Population and Development, was given a private audience to discuss the lot of poor and abandoned women, she was startled to hear the Pope say, "Don't you think that the irresponsible behavior of men is caused by women?" For the Pope to ignore the changing status of women is a mistake on the scale of that committed by sixteenth-century Popes who missed the new emphasis on the Bible's importance for laymen and scholars—a mistake for which the Church has been playing four hundred years of catch-up with the Reformation.

Pope John Paul II's blind spot on this subject is such that, trained philosopher though he is, he makes the most simple-minded argument against women's being priests; namely, that the twelve disciples in the Gospels were all men. No matter when God became incarnate, He would

ON THE BEACH

Much of the absorbing pleasure of first watching Peter Brook's black-and-white "Lord of the Flies," back in 1963, came from the convincingly innocent and then violently pagan appearance of its troupe of young castaways. Searching for an edgy, extemporaneous tone, Brook picked a cast of British and American schoolboys, none of whom had ever acted before, assembled them on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques, and shot the film with an amateur crew, using a paperback copy of the William Golding novel as a script. Last August, director and cast were reunited on Vieques for a BBC special, "Time Flies," which just aired in Britain, and Tom Hollyman, the magazine photographer-turned-cinematographer for the original, took their portrait one more time. Time, which worked such devastating alterations on the young survivors in the movie, has not stayed its hand (except perhaps with Brook himself), and the life stories seem as random as in any novel. Only James Aubrey Tregidgo, who played the heroic Ralph (center below, and continuing counterclockwise), has remained an actor. Tom Chapin, who was the evil Jack, is a geologist; Tom Gaman (Simon) is a forester; and Hugh Edwards (Piggy) is an executive with an international candy concern. The twins Eric and Sam are David and Simon Surtees—a Conservative Party official and a London guidance counsellor, respectively. Omens and connections here are up to the viewer, but the lordly head next to Mr. Brook is best left out of the plot this time.

Photograph by Tom Hollyman

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have lived with the cultural limitations of the period. Early Christians were slaveholders, too. Given the scene of Jesus' ministry, it was obvious that his disciples would be not only men but Jews, speakers of Aramaic, and married. Peter's is the only wife of a disciple mentioned in the Gospels, but it would have been odd—and would have called for explanation—if the other disciples were not married, too. Some modern scholars think that even Paul, who later encouraged people to join him in his unmarried state because the world was about to end, was not celibate for the first forty years of his life (before he became a Christian) but had a wife, from whom he was eventually separated by death or divorce. So the Pope is in the truly weird position of saying that the reason women cannot be priests is that the original disciples were men, and that priests cannot be married, even though the original disciples were married.

For the Pope, asceticism and the faith are almost identical. This explains his deep devotion to his motherland, which is not simply a matter of bone-of-my-bone patriotism. From the time of the Nazi occupation, he felt that Poland, because it suffered and stayed true to the faith, would be a savior nation for the rest of the world, and especially for the hedonistic West, which was too selfish to take up the Cross. This is the Slavic mysticism we meet in others, from Dostoyevski to Solzhenitsyn. Bogdan Lewandowski, an Under-Secretary of the United Nations who in 1981 had a papal audience lasting several hours, told the authors that John Paul II showed concern that his "homeland serve as an example of true Catholicism, a 'people's Catholicism' for the materialistic and permissive west." In 1976, while Wojtyla was still the Cardinal of Kraków, he made his first visit to the United States, which had been arranged for him by the translator of his philosophical work, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. She and her husband were concerned that by voicing his hostility to the West he would offend the audiences they had arranged for him to address. The husband recalls, "He tended to regard Western countries and especially the United States as immoral, amoral perhaps. He had no real appreciation of the virtues of democracy."

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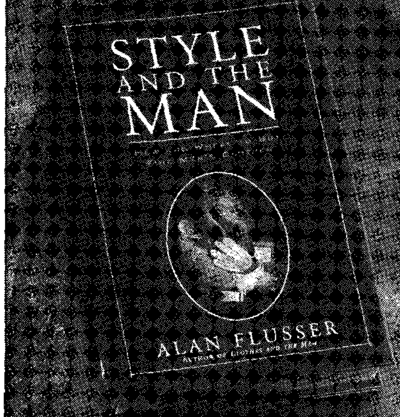

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"His Holiness" attributes the Pope's current melancholy to his fear that Poland has become as corrupt as the sybaritic West. The only time he has ever shown anger in public was during his 1991 visit to Poland, when he denounced his homeland's attitude toward abortion. Polls showed that sixty-nine per cent of the Poles wanted the ban on it to be lifted. Later in the visit, he said, "This people worships me with its lips, but not in the depths of its heart." His messianic hopes for the timeless Church of his ideal Poland had been betrayed by the real thing. But to treat Poland as a Christ among nations is, in Biblical terms, idolatry—giving devotion that only God deserves to a created thing. There is pathos, but a kind of inevitability, in the Pope's disillusionment with Poland, his oldest earthly love. All idols come apart under the pressure of one's need for them. In the words of Isaiah 46:1, "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth." ♦

HARDLY CRICKET

A very different sort of English novel.

BY MICHAEL HOFMANN

James Buchan

MOST contemporary British fiction is either domesticity or caricature—"aunts," as a European publisher once said to me, getting it in one. Against such a background, the worldly and expert James Buchan cuts a rather unlikely and underappreciated figure. It has led to his books' being mistaken for thrillers, and here the fact that he is the grandson of John Buchan, the author of "The Thirty-nine Steps," can't have helped.

Actually, James Buchan reminds me not of his grandfather but of the Austrian novelist Joseph Roth (1894-1939). Both men worked as journalists (Buchan was for ten years a foreign correspondent for the *Financial Times*); both wrote novels based on recent history (*Zeitromane*, "time-novels," is the German word); both are chroniclers of their respective countries' decline. Their books share several unlikely pairs of characteristics—they are brisk and elegiac, analytical and physical, and are concerned with the *grand monde* of power and money—but what actually drives them is an inoperable melancholy.

The main difference between the two writers is that, whereas for Roth and his generation the crucial experience was the First World War, for Buchan it is the Cold War (the subject of his previous novel "The Golden Plough") and the workings of diplomacy and finance. Not that there is anything especially pacific about those, either, as Buchan himself observes in his new book: "The boom that followed the lowering of interest by the United States Federal Reserve in August 1982 was to [Cohen's] generation of financiers what a sanguinary war is to ambitious military officers."

"High Latitudes" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $22) is Buchan's fifth novel. It is set in the late eighties, chiefly in London and on a country estate in the North of England by the name of Wexley Park, but also in New York, Alaska, Kyoto, and the South Pole (hence the title). Its main characters are Stephen Cohen, a successful merchant banker (who profited from that post-'82 boom); Cohen's Old Etonian chum Johnny Bellarmine, owner of Wexley Park, scion of an aristocratic line that includes mine owners, polar explorers, and many of "the great and the good"; and Johnny's divorced wife, Jane, who is the managing director of a large textile company and is trapped in an important but

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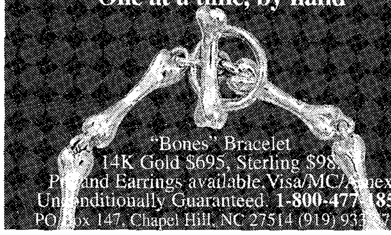

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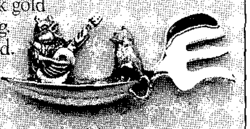

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rather cheerless life. They are serious, moral, and clever people. The action of the book turns on a series of catastrophes—some of them lightly fictionalized, like the tanker Zenon Bellarmine's running aground off the coast of Alaska, others noted in Buchan's weightily beautiful style ("a hurricane among the sprouting sub-divisions of Southern Florida, another storm in Western Europe, a fire among the movie mansions of Malibu")—and their effect on the insurance company Lloyd's of London and its backers: "about thirty thousand families of the English and Scots gentry," commonly known as Names. Neither the banker nor the aristocrat nor the company manager can escape the moral and financial consequences, but all three have the resourcefulness to cut their losses and cast themselves adrift.

The novel has many claims on our consideration. The sites—reclaimed for fiction from the movies or, more probably, the TV news—are expensive and wonderful. It is always one of the pleasures of reading Buchan to learn what it might be like to do something you are not likely to do, whether it's sitting next to Mrs. Thatcher on a sofa or pulling an otter from oily water. Related to this is the pleasure of reading about characters who are not introspectives or author surrogates but wealth-producers, movers and shakers.

Buchan's detractors like to say that his research and information are all very well, but he should be writing nonfiction. (He has recently completed a book on the philosophy and history of money.) I couldn't disagree more. His authority—like Joseph Roth's—is not, in the end, a matter of facts and history but a matter of the imagination. There is a scene in "High Latitudes" in which Stephen, in his pinstripes, has to climb on a table and address the female workforce of Jane's company, in order to explain to them the share option they would receive if they agreed to a pay cut: "His eyes fluttered to the windows, in their Sixties metal frames, slashed with rain. He heard a roaring, which must have been the wind outside." A lot of writers could have written those two sentences: detail, precision, point of view, Hemingway, you hear them saying to themselves. But there follows a third sentence, which puts Buchan in very select company indeed: "He was happy as he had never been in his life." ♦

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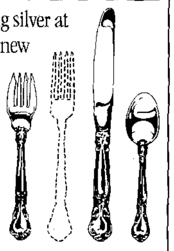

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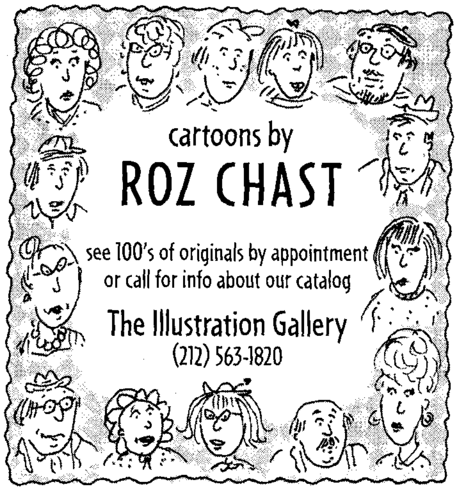

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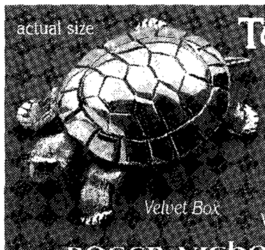

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BRIEFLY NOTED

THE ENCHANTMENT OF LILY DAHL, by Siri Hustvedt (Holt; $23). Lily Dahl is a nineteen-year-old waitress in a small Minnesota town who has acting aspirations. She falls in love with a sexy visiting New York artist and befriends an elderly female professor who is her neighbor, but she also retains her connections to a credulity-stretching quotient of local weirdos, one of whom seems to have murdered somebody. You are moved by the sober intensity with which Lily struggles toward a larger vision of her tiny world—a vision that is inaccessible to most of its inhabitants.

HOUDINI!!!, by Kenneth Silverman (HarperCollins; $35). "It was Houdini himself that was the secret," Bess Houdini said of her sentimental, irascible, athletic, ingenious husband, who died in 1926 at the age of fifty-two. Houdini, né Erik Weisz, was internationally famous for his spectacular escape stunts: he could free himself while manacled underwater, while dangling above a city street, while submerged and suspended upside down in a sealed and locked glass tank. To a biographer like Silverman, who is also a magician, Houdini presents an interesting problem: how to unveil his life and art without "violating the cardinal rule of magic: Don't Expose."

WATER: A NATURAL HISTORY, by Alice Outwater (Basic; $23). This book's great virtue is the ease with which it explains how water works its way through North America. The author, an expert on sludge, tells why our water is not all it should be, even though very little new industrial waste is being added. She describes how once plentiful species—beavers, prairie dogs, bison, alligators—indirectly contributed to cleaning water, and how the loss of forest and the decline of forest fires have affected water quality. Her tone is attractively specific: stylish in its directness, and realistic in its proposals.

RUMORS AND STONES: A JOURNEY, by Wayne Karlin (Curbstone; $19.95). The feisty son of a Jewish boxer grows up in White Plains barraged by his mother's ever-changing stories. To get at the truth, he visits her birthplace, the Polish village of Kolno, whose Jewish population was massacred during the Second World War. Examining this "tiny thread in the tapestry of murder," the author vividly re-creates his mother's childhood there as the daughter of a wealthy cloth smuggler. At the same time, Karlin darts in and out of his own history—as a helicopter gunner in Vietnam; as a member of a Vietnamese-American writers' group—shaping the past into a fist that "can press against your forehead until a light bursts behind your eyes."

TYRANNY OF THE NORMAL: ESSAYS ON BIOETHICS, THEOLOGY & MYTH, by Leslie Fiedler (Godine; $22.95). From literature, high and low, Fiedler educes human ambivalences: our simultaneous desire to protect children and to harm them, for example, or our disgust for those we pity or respect. This prolific writer remains as provocative as ever, boldly going where few literary critics dare to venture.

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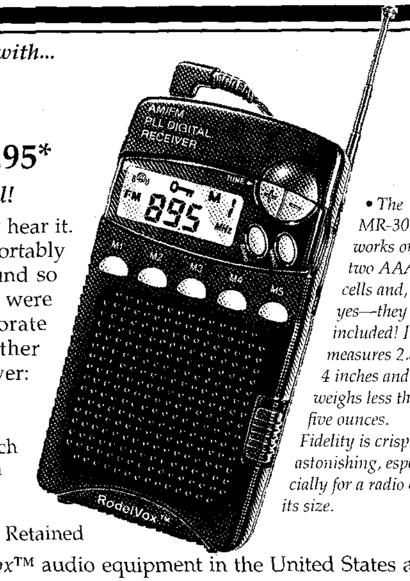

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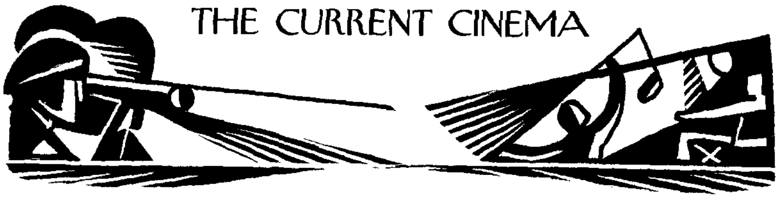


PLAYING WITH FIRE

"Shine" and "The Crucible."

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

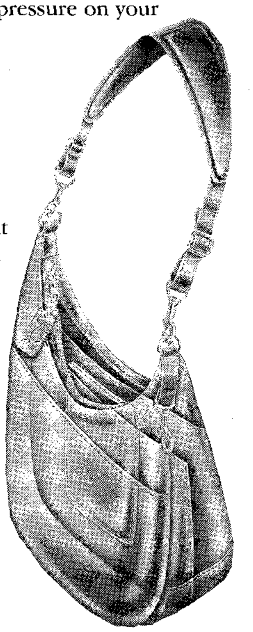
ALTHOUGH Scott Hicks's speedy, absorbing "Shine" is a biography of a concert pianist, and its own structure is consciously musical, the movie isn't in any fundamental way *about* music: its hero, an Australian musician named David Helfgott (who is a real person), becomes in the course of the film a kind of universal artist-in-torment figure—a man whose creative aspirations and obsessive personality drive him mad. The romantic image of genius's perils is reassuringly familiar: an unusually high percentage of artists whose lives wind up on movie screens fall into this category, for the obvious reason that insanity supplies a dramatic focus that the solitary and painstaking activity of making art otherwise lacks. And, of course, the idea that creativity is *dangerous*—that the true artist is always playing with fire, risking emotional self-immolation—is immensely comforting both to filmmakers, for whom the notion functions as a self-aggrandizing heroic myth, and to the audience, for whom it provides a there-but-for-the-grace-of-God cautionary moral: compared with the hell that van Gogh or Nijinsky lived in, a dull, stable, uncreative existence can suddenly seem very attractive.

David Helfgott (Noah Taylor) plays the piano under the critical eye of his father (Armin Mueller-Stahl).

In "Shine," as in most movies of this kind, the particular nature of the art form is practically irrelevant; madness itself is the point. What sets this film apart is that Hicks and the screenwriter, Jan Sardi, employ an elliptical, impressionistic narrative style that actually emphasizes the abstractness of their conception of "the artist" and yet doesn't drain the story of its vitality. "Shine" would be more interesting intellectually—and more complex psychologically—if it had attempted to explore the specific topography of a musician's mind (as, for example, François Girard's brilliant "Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould" did). The filmmakers' innocence of anything but the pure power of their hoary romantic theme does, however, give their work a moving and distinctive sweetness: like the hero, they play their showy piece with ferocious attack and undeniable conviction, and, if only for the duration of the performance, their intensity is irresistible.

Part of the appeal of Helfgott's story is that—unlike the stories of many other artists who have lost their emotional bearings—it has a happy ending. The pianist, who is now forty-nine, suffered a severe breakdown while studying at the Royal College of Music, in London; he returned to Australia and, improbably, after spending a decade in institutions, where his doctors forbade him to play the piano, resumed his career. Helfgott's experience, as "Shine" relates it, represents not only the usual inspiring triumph over adversity but also a nearly magical reversal of his relationship to his art: before his collapse, music is his curse; afterward, it's his salvation. "Shine" highlights this fairy-tale symmetry by strategically omitting most of what in a conventional dramatic structure would be the second of three acts—that is, Helfgott's long stretch in mental hospitals. Aside from one very brief scene in which we see the hero receiving electroshock therapy, the undoubtedly arduous process of his recovery remains hidden from us and therefore doesn't exist dramatically. The film, shuttling freely between Helfgott's pre-breakdown agony and his post-breakdown ecstasy, deftly solicits a kind of childlike credulity from the audience: lulled by the narrative's seductive back-and-forth motion, we wind up assenting to what looks like a miracle.

In the scenes of Helfgott's childhood (in which the hero is played by Alex Rafalowicz), little David seems earnest and unnaturally quiet. We're given to understand that he's thoroughly intimidated by his stern father, Peter (Armin Mueller-Stahl), a Polish-Jewish immigrant who, in an obvious attempt to compensate for the disappointments of his life (his own father wouldn't allow him to have a violin), devotes himself single-mindedly to his son's musical education. He drives David mercilessly, arguing with his teachers and entering him in competitions and smothering him—as nervous, unhappy parents do—with constant critical scrutiny. There's no doubt that Peter loves his son, but, unfortunately, it's the kind of suspicious, insecure love that always demands proof and never gets quite enough: he tells David, "You're a very lucky boy," and the child dutifully responds, "I'm a very lucky boy," as if reciting the litany of a daily service. By the time David breaks free of his father's domination and accepts a scholarship to the Royal College, he's seriously damaged. When we see him (now played by Noah Taylor) in London, his mute misery appears slightly less acute—he's more voluble, anyway—but he still shows signs of being wound too tight: he works too much and smokes



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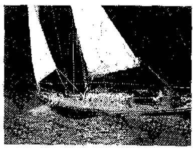

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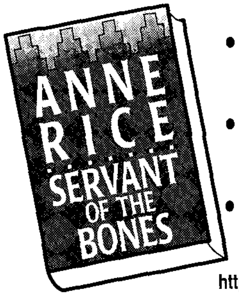

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Nothing, nothing anywhere, night and day and night,
Poor wind blowing, looking for a fight,
Nothing left to blow against, nothing left to bite!

—EMILY HAHN

too much, and whenever he hunches over the key-board we sense the persistence of the clenched, inward-looking remoteness that his father has instilled in him. Peter, cruelly, disowned him when he decided to study in London—a withdrawal of affection that inevitably leaves the confused young man with even more to prove.

And so, in a muddled attempt both to vindicate his independence and to demonstrate his filial loyalty, he chooses to perform in public his father's favorite piece, the notoriously difficult Piano Concerto No. 3 by Rachmaninoff. After intensive rehearsals with his benign old teacher, Cecil Parkes (John Gielgud), David plays the piece flawlessly and feelingly, receives a thunderous ovation, and then promptly pays the price for the exhilarating release of all the tension and guilt and competitive desire that have been building up in him: he collapses onstage, sodden with sweat, as if the effort to resolve his barely understood experience had wholly depleted his resources.

The concert is the pivotal episode in "Shine." It's not a conventional dramatic turning point, because the story isn't told chronologically; by the time that sequence occurs, we've had several scenes from David's later, post-institutional life. (In them, he's played by Geoffrey Rush.) But the performance of the Rach 3—as Parkes refers to it, in a tone that hilariously combines reverence and abject terror—is the event around which every moment of David Helfgott's life revolves. It represents the filmmakers' idea of the sort of scary peak that artists aspire to scale. And once David has attained this dreadful summit he has nowhere to go but down, precipitously. When we see the older David, babbling and distracted (and still chain-smoking) but nevertheless somehow at peace with himself, we're aware that he has become a different kind of artist: he's less concerned, it appears, with climbing mountains than with walking a straight line on level ground without toppling over. Although we recognize that this equilibrium is hard won, it feels like a bit of a letdown.

And that sense of diminution is, I think, largely the consequence of the movie's old-fashioned romanticism about artistic struggle. The implication of Helfgott's volcanic performance of the Rach 3 is that for the artist the greatest art is necessarily unendurable: it sums up his experience so comprehensively that it effectively negates him. The way "Shine" is constructed, there's no middle ground between the vision of art as self-consuming cognitive passion (embodied by the David of the Royal College period) and the vision of art as amusing, low-impact therapy (embodied by the antic and blissfully childlike older David). Essentially, Hicks sacrifices process—of musical development, and of recovery from mental illness—for pace, and although the movie's swiftness and lightness are pleasing in themselves, the over-all image they create is indistinct: it just evaporates in your head when the lights come up. "Shine" is a fluent and craftsmanlike piece of filmmaking, and the acting is consistently wonderful. (Gielgud is in especially buoyant form here; his exclamation "Don't you love those big fat chords!" is the most sublime bit of comedy in the movies this year.) But in the end it leaves us with an odd and unsatisfying impression of an artist's serenity: a middle-aged man looking at life and muttering, over and over, "It's a mystery, it's a mystery." If that mantra is enough to make him happy, then he's a rare musician indeed—not at all a representative artist but simply a very, very lucky boy.

IN Arthur Miller's 1953 play, "The Crucible," the witchcraft trials that took place in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692 are presented as an open-and-shut case of social injustice. On the strength of flimsy accusations by hysterical teenage girls, dozens of innocent townspeople are charged with consorting with the Devil and are brought to trial before a panel of rigid, severe Puritan inquisitors; many are convicted, and those who refuse to confess are executed. Miller has always maintained that his play was a cry of protest against the anti-Communist zealotry of the House Un-American Activities Committee, but the connection between the events in Salem and the fearful atmosphere of the McCarthy era is slight. Soon after "The Crucible" opened, the critic Robert Warshow astutely dismantled Miller's rickety analogy: "The Salem trials were not political. . . . Nor were the 'witches' being 'persecuted'—as the Puritans did persecute Quakers, for instance. . . .The Salem 'witches' suffered something that may be worse than persecution: they were hanged because of a metaphysical error." In Nicholas Hytner's new film of "The Crucible," which has a screenplay by the playwright himself, the parallel between the actual witch-hunts of the seventeenth century and the metaphorical witch-hunts of the nineteen-fifties looks even weaker than it must have forty-three years ago. But Hytner's florid, hyperbolic direction does reveal the play as a characteristic product of its

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time—not so much in its social attitudes as in its sexual politics.

The themes that come through most clearly in this overwrought movie are fear of women and hatred of youth. The ringleader of the young female accusers, Abigail Williams (Winona Ryder), is a pretty teen-ager whose viciousness is explicitly attributed to sexual frustration. (In the Freudianized drama of the fifties, repression was the root of all evil.) She participates in mildly orgiastic mumbo-jumbo rites in the woods in the hope of inducing the return of a married lover, John Proctor (Daniel Day-Lewis): after a brief affair, honest John asked forgiveness of his wife, Elizabeth (Joan Allen), and has steadfastly refused to resume relations with Abigail. The teen-ager's inability to lure her handsome lover back to her bed becomes the primary motivating force of the drama, and that's an absurdity on every level: historically, because the real Abigail Williams was eleven years old in 1692 and John Proctor was sixty; thematically, because a spurned lover's spite seems an awfully frivolous explanation for a complex, tragic historical event; and metaphorically, because, after all, no one ever suggested that McCarthy and Nixon were punishing leftists for not sleeping with them. As "The Crucible" edges poor John Proctor closer to his martyrdom, the film begins to play less like a stinging political manifesto than like one of those earnest exposé-style fifties movies in which gangs of hormone-crazed "juvenile delinquents" run riot and terrorize the respectable folk.

Except for Joan Allen, who gives a delicate, restrained performance, the actors are undone by the obviousness of the material. Ryder, Day-Lewis, and Paul Scofield (cast as the chief inquisitor, Danforth) play their roles to the hilt; none of them seem to have noticed that the blades are dull. Watching this version of "The Crucible," you can't help suspecting that the enduring popularity of Miller's melodrama is actually based on a universal fear of teen-age female sexuality. (That, at least, might explain why high-school teachers are so fond of the play.) The girls of Salem squeal and writhe, and the manliest man in the colonies swings from the gallows. Miller and Hytner have a lot in common with their bad-seed villainess: like her, they know how to use theatrics and hysteria to get revenge on the opposite sex. ♦

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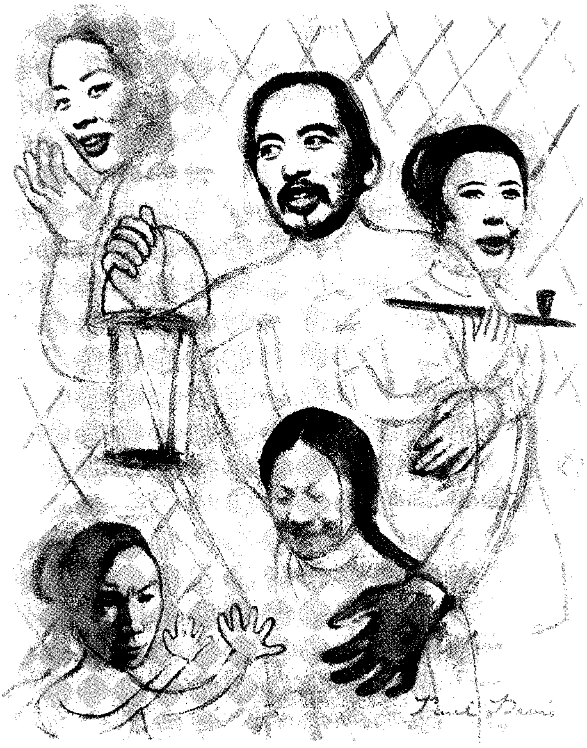
THE THEATRE

GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

David Henry Hwang and Julia Sweeney pull back the curtain on families in transition.

BY JOHN LAHR

THE success of David Henry Hwang's "M. Butterfly," in 1988, made him the first Asian-American playwright on Broadway. The legend of the play was dramatic: after mixed reviews out of town, one of its two producers withdrew his support, and the other, Stuart Ostrow, was forced to mortgage his house to get the show to New York. It was a long shot that paid off big. Hwang's next play, in 1993, was "Face Value," a farce about racial stereotyping; it was an even bigger roll of the dice, and, sadly, it crapped out. The last time I saw Hwang, he and Ostrow were under siege in Boston as "Face Value" tried vainly to take shape. (It closed just before its Broadway opening.) The Stanford-educated Hwang, whose father is a banker and whose mother is a pianist, is as all-American as an egg cream; he was trying to find a theatrical language to express the particular psychic mutation of being at once Asian and American. To do so, he had chosen to imitate the form and the linguistic maneuvers of the English playwright Joe Orton. Now, in the fascinating "Golden Child" (at the Public Theatre), Hwang has returned to the same theme but has found a storytelling style and idiom that are uniquely his own.



Chinese ancestor worship collides with American culture in "Golden Child."

At issue here is the nature of American individualism, whose liberation and oppression are perhaps best seen through another cultural lens. "Not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors," Alexis de Tocqueville wrote after his visit to the New World. "But it hides his descendants and separates his contemporaries from him." "Golden Child" begins with a very modern Asian-American narrator, Andrew Kwong (Stan Egi), who, caught in a traffic jam on the way to J.F.K., is thinking about his pregnant wife, about becoming a father, and about the "dynamite joint" he's just smoked. And while Kwong is trapped in this iconic ozone of American solitude—he is self-enclosed, on the move, in pursuit of "the destiny of

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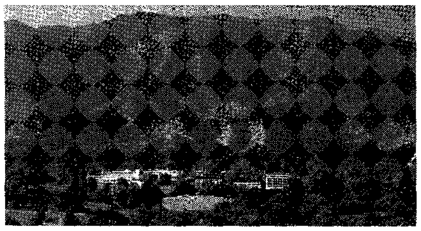

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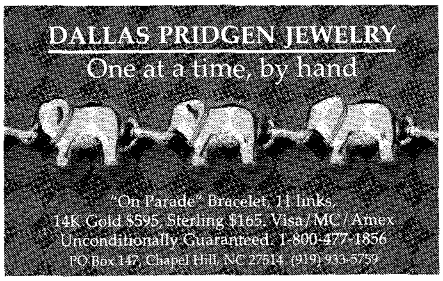
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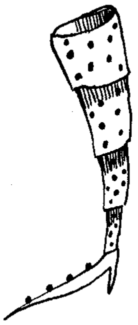
me"—one of his ancestors comes to him in a vision. It's his recently dead grandmother, a pint-size bundle of Christian piety called Ahn (the impish, compelling Julyana Soelistyo). "Make money, not important. Have friend, not important. Only one thing important: you love Jesus" are Ahn's fanatical first words to her Americanized grandson.

The play then flashes back to 1918, to explore how this seed of Christian faith was planted in Amoy, China, and took root in America. Egi and Soelistyo double as characters in the Chinese story. Egi becomes Andrew Kwong's great-grandfather, the enlightened Eng Tieng-bin, whose business travels have cultivated in him an appealing broad-mindedness: he unbinds young Ahn's feet and embraces Christianity. Likewise, Soelistyo, in an extraordinary theatrical transformation, becomes the ten-year-old Ahn, a schoolgirl shuttling between the pagodas of Eng Tieng-bin's three wives. Here, with the great-grandfather played by the great-grandson, the doubling takes on a metaphoric resonance. In Chinese culture, where ritual life and emotional life are structured around ancestor worship, the past is always in the present. "Death does not release the son from responsibility to his parents," the program reminds us. "The deceased have the same needs and desires as when they are alive." These never-ending responsibilities, caveats, and associations restrict the spirit and warp it just as surely as the binding of women's feet does. "To be Chinese is to feel a whole web of obligations," Eng Tieng-bin says. "All the time I see ghosts." By contrast, the exhilaration of the New World lies in its liberation from the old one. The past is sacrificed for the dream of a future. "This is America," Kwong says at one point. "Everyone's ashamed of their ancestors." What the play dramatizes is a collision of cultures, where ancestor worship and the worship of self are at odds.



"If only I could truly feel like an individual," Eng Tieng-bin confides to the Reverend Mr. Baines (John Christopher Jones), a plump English missionary with an appetite for cakes and conversions, whose English is cleverly stylized by Hwang as if it had been scrambled through an Asian filter. In their good-natured banter, Baines tries to get Eng Tieng-bin to brag—to practice boasting as an exercise in individualization. It's a sweet, telling scene, which is well directed by James Lapine. Eng Tieng-bin's inhibitions have the startling effect of making the audience feel the enormity of psychic repression in a world ruled by the view—often stated by the disappointed, opium-smoking wife No. 1, Eng Siu-yong (Tsai Chin)—that "life is not personal." Tieng-bin loves wife No. 3, the beautiful Eng Eling (Liana Pai), but in a society governed by the fear of ancestral reprisals he, like his wives, is caught in a network of ritualized obligations to his other wives. Baines tells him, "Jesus say, 'No fear, only believe, you will be make whole.' " Eng Tieng-bin is ravished by Christianity's revolutionary promise. "How many of us really have the courage to live our own lives?" he says. "And me, worst of all, a Chinese—who believes only a coward can really be true to himself." Gradually, he finds the courage, and the play charts the incursion of renegade Christian ideas into the rigidity of Chinese family life. To embrace Christ is to embrace one god (which destroys the chain of ancestors) and one wife (which destroys the family). It's what Tieng-bin calls "a cult of its own design, raging against all other faiths."

Hwang enjoys the bitter comedy of the rivalry among the wives. "Listen," says wife No. 2, Eng Luan (Jodi Long), glancing in the direction of No. 3's pavilion and stirring up trouble. "She's playing Italian music. Italy is the home of the Christian church, you know. It's where Jesus is buried." Wife No. 1, who is the traditionalist, spouts fundamental Chinese credo: "Humility is power. And death is the ultimate humility." She refuses to convert to her husband's new faith, as the other wives will. Instead, she continues her ritual observances. "Worshipping our ancestors chains us to the past," Tieng-bin tells her, stalking into her pavilion, where she's stoned on opium. In a terrific scene, Tieng-bin is provoked by her to lose his temper: he smashes her family picture and kicks over her altar. Eventually, she commits suicide.

His love match with wife No. 3 fares no better. Eng Eling, who is the youngest wife, is receptive to the new. She loves playing her phonograph and listening to "La Traviata." "It fills me with feelings," she says. "Modern feelings. Delicious feelings of . . . power." To Tieng-bin she is the embodiment of pleasure, choice, and self-aggrandizement, and when she becomes pregnant the child personifies their rebirth as Christians and as individuals. But Eng Eling dies in labor, leaving Tieng-bin alone with his golden child, Ahn, whom he adores, and with wife No. 2, whom he dislikes. "So—this is Western monogamy, is it?" he says to the heavens. "Sure—you get to spend your entire life with one woman. The catch is—it's always the wrong woman." He adds bitterly, "I have betrayed my ancestors, and murdered the woman I love. Yes, by embracing the West, I have finally become . . . an individual."

Tieng-bin saw the light but never quite loved it enough. Ahn inherits her father's faith and brings it to the New World—the world in which Andrew Kwong has grown up. Kwong is a simulacrum of the author, picking through the lives of his ancestors to make use of their stories for his own life. He sees that Ahn, by praying to a Christian god, is not abandoning the old ways so much as coöpting them in order to live in a new way. In praying to the Holy Father, she is also praying to her own.

The play ends where it began—in the present, with Andrew Kwong reaching his actual and spiritual destination. He has come to some accommodation of the old with the new. He is an American, but he is also a writer, who is the repository of stories about those who have come before. Hwang concludes on an elegiac note, with Asian faces projected on a scrim behind Kwong. "I realize that my face too will one day be added to this constellation, that in the imagination of our descendants we will all be born again," he says. It's a powerful conclusion to a play that opens up the parochial heart of the audience to a sense of otherness—not just the otherness of the Asian community but the strangeness of all of us who consider ourselves "American."

THERE are also ghosts and offerings to the dead in Julia Sweeney's moving one-woman show, "God Said 'Ha!' " (at the Lyceum Theatre). Sweeney, who is probably best known to watchers of "Saturday Night Live," where she originated the character of Pat, is a self-effacing Catholic girl who comes from Spokane, Washington, and keeps her fury and her intelligence carefully disguised behind a dry, self-deprecating throwaway style. On the night I saw her, she was a study in crimson, and she worked the audience rather like a girl with new contact lenses easing her way into a party. Even before she got into the body of her grim story—she was not going to be the bearer of glad tidings—she wanted us to know that she was divorced and that she had always had a quality about her that "says to the world, 'Please ignore me, I do not exist.' " Of course, this is a setup and probably a lie: it takes a certain amount of chutzpah to consume an hour and a half of people's time talking about your tragedies when they have paid good money to forget their own. Sweeney tells the audience what happened when her brother Mike was diagnosed with terminal cancer and moved into her newly acquired Hollywood bungalow, only to be followed there by her mother and father, who stayed for nine months. In that time, they lived through Mike's long dying and her own cervical cancer. These are very rough waters to navigate, but Sweeney sails through them elegantly. At one point in this winning, mordant saga, which is really an act of mourning passing as a good night out, she's told by her doctor that during surgery her ovaries were repositioned, and that this will allow her to have a biological child: "We can go in and extract some eggs and then you can mix them with some sperm and have a surrogate mother have the child for you." Sweeney fixes the audience with a glance that is slyly sardonic. "I'm taking all this in," she says. "And I thought, Oh great, now I have to meet a guy *and* a girl!" ♦

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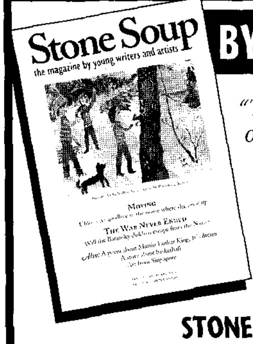

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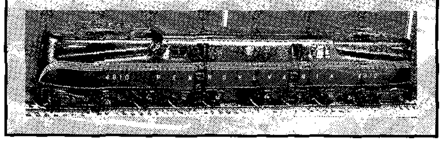

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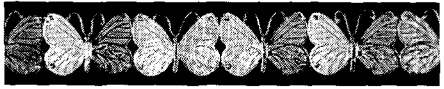

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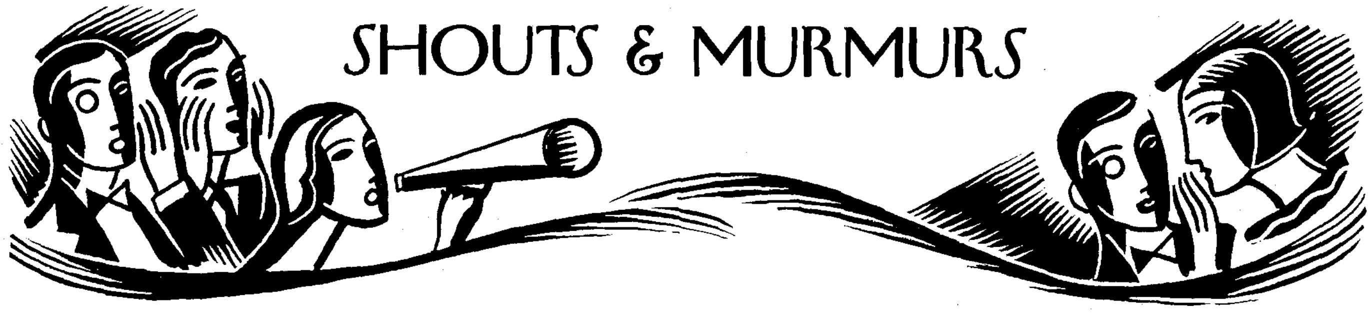


WONTON LUST

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

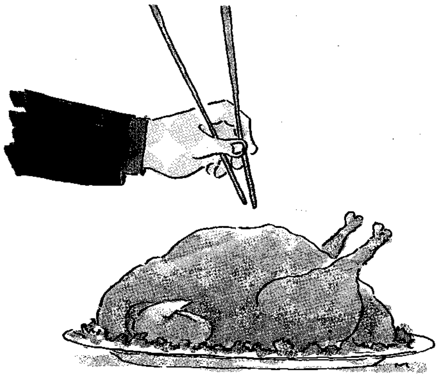
My wife, Alice, doesn't want to go to Chinatown for Thanksgiving this year. "Alice has changed," I told friends when I learned of her decision. "She's not the Alice we once knew." But, then again, maybe she is. Now that I look back on those Thanksgiving meals—Alice and I and our two daughters in a Chinese restaurant, stuffing down some particularly festive fare, like minced squab in lettuce leaves—maybe she was the one member of the family who was lacking genuine enthusiasm.

I should explain that we are floaters on Thanksgiving. Alice has always been interested in a big Christmas celebration. (I've always felt the same way about Halloween; you might say it's a mixed marriage.) Given the proportions of the dinner we put on at Christmas every year, our holding a Thanksgiving dinner at home would be the equivalent of the Allies' deciding to invade some other continent five weeks before the Normandy landings, just to keep in practice.

I think a lot of people feel that Christmas and Thanksgiving are too close together to be celebrated by similar blowouts. Canadians, who have an international reputation for good sense, give thanks in October, which puts a little distance between the times you have to haul the extra chairs up from the basement and brace yourself for your uncle Norton's dissertation on miles-per-gallon in autumn driving conditions. It may be significant that except in Toronto and Vancouver the Chinese-restaurant options in Canada tend to be rather grim.

In the early eighties, we had Thanksgiving at home for a couple of years. At the time, I was launching my campaign to change the national Thanksgiving dish from turkey to spaghetti carbonara—which I believe the Indians, having had some experience with Pilgrim cuisine, must have brought with them to the first Thanksgiving—and I thought we should set an example. Now that I think of it, Alice was never completely in the Spaghetti Carbonara Day spirit.

Once we began floating again, we were not overburdened with invitations. In Alice's view, a hostess who knew she was going to be berated for having no sense of history simply because she was serving turkey instead of spaghetti carbonara might decide that, all in all, she'd rather listen to her uncle Norton.



Even when a friend did phone to invite us for Thanksgiving, though, I would often say, "Thanks, but we've got plans: we're going to Chinatown." To me, it seemed logical. The Thanksgiving ritual is based on eating, and, in that spirit, what I particularly wanted to give thanks for was the Immigration Act of 1965. Until then, this country virtually excluded Chinese while letting in as many English people as cared to come—a policy that in culinary terms bordered on the suicidal. After 1965, it became increasingly safe in America to go out to dinner without carting along your own spaghetti carbonara.

Naturally, I'd speak during the meal about what Americans should be grateful for. "If the Pilgrims had been followed to the New World only by other Pilgrims," I'd say to the girls between bites of duck with Chinese flowering chives, "we would now be eating overcooked cauliflower and warm gray meat. So count your blessings, ladies."

Our daughters are grown now, but with both of them expected for Thanksgiving this year I took it for granted that we'd be eating in Chinatown. So did they. Among the Thanksgiving customs they said they were looking forward to were salt-and-pepper shrimp and lo mein with ginger and scallion. Then I heard Alice on the telephone with a friend of ours I'll call Nora, at whose house we'd celebrated a couple of Thanksgivings. Nora does a turkey-and-stuffing dinner that would make Norman Rockwell sorry he hadn't brought along his brushes and canvas. Alice was saying that we'd absolutely love to come for Thanksgiving this year.

I suppose I should have been able to foresee this turn of events several years ago, when Alice insisted one Thanksgiving that in addition to dinner in Chinatown we all go to a Broadway musical together, "so there's something celebratory." What could be more celebratory than minced squab in lettuce leaves? And what exactly does Thanksgiving have to do with Rodgers and Hart, who would have been put in the stocks by the Pilgrims for having a sense of melody?

"I just love going to Nora's for Thanksgiving," she said to me after she hung up the phone. "And so do the girls. And so do you. You know you do."

"I wonder if Nora would be willing to augment the cranberry sauce with a little take-out stuffed bean curd," I said. "Just for the sake of tradition." ♦

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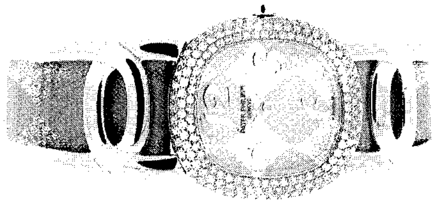

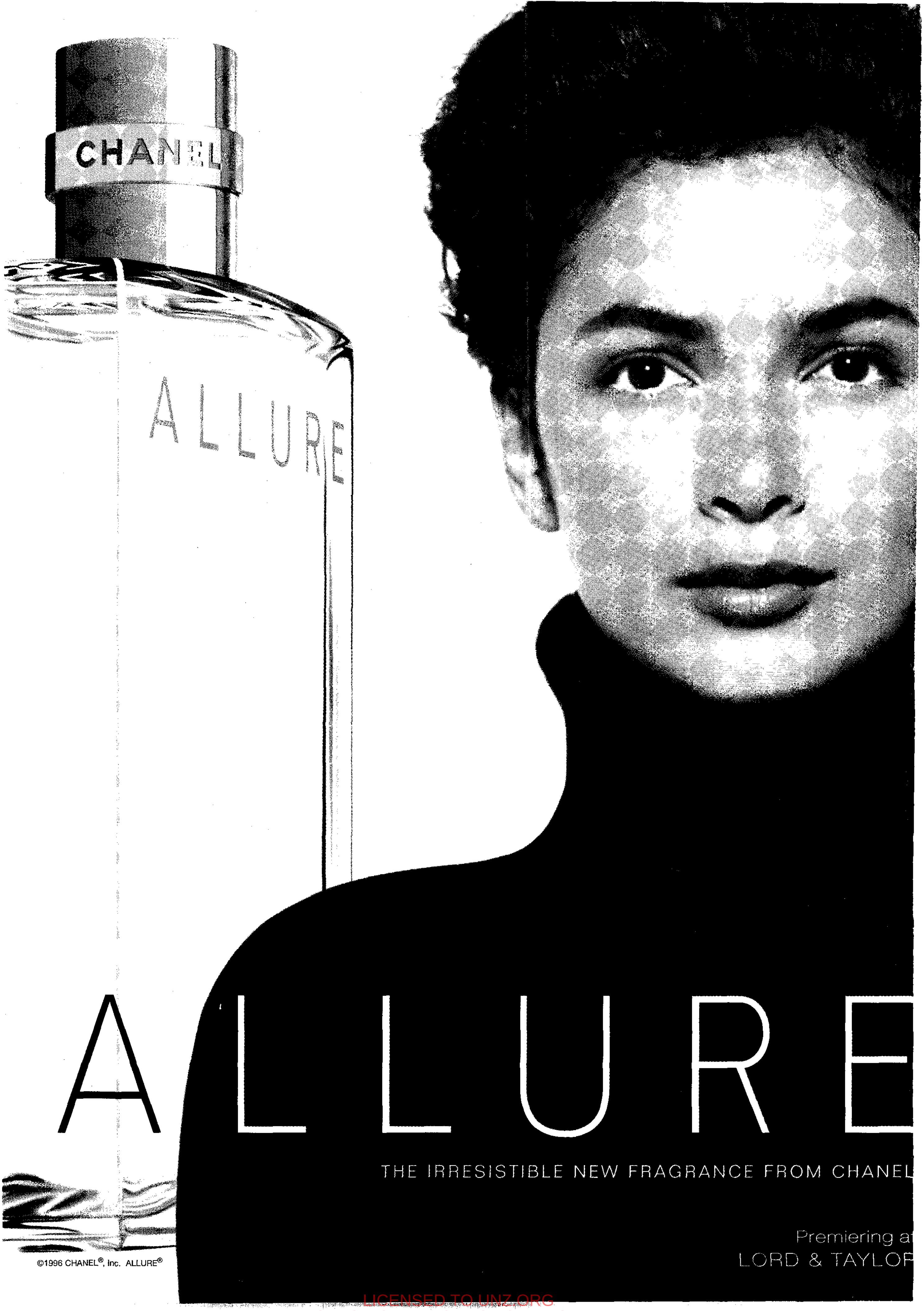
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